THE DAMSEL OF THE THREE SKIRTS

THE CHILD OF MY WIFE

DE KOCK

G. E. Wright's
Book

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Masterpieces of French Literature

THE DAMSEL OF THE THREE SKIRTS AND THE CHILD OF MY WIFE

BY

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Translated into English by

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SOCIÉTÉ DES BEAUX-ARTS

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CHAPTER I

A Journey. An Accident. Adventures

"We shall never arrive at our destination, we shall never get to Strasburg this evening, Mullern," exclaimed Colonel von Framberg impatiently; "I do wish you would tell the postilion to lash up those sorry steeds of his and put a little life into them."

"That's something I have already told him to do twenty times at least during the past hour, Colonel," responded the person addressed; "and he invariably answers that unless we want to get all three of our necks broken we cannot go any faster."

"I greatly fear Henri will have left Strasburg by the time we reach there, Mullern," said the colonel.

"Then, Colonel," responded Mullern, "in that case we must continue to follow him."

"And, perhaps," added the colonel, "we shall not come up with him in time to prevent the misfortune which I fear."

"Should that happen, Colonel, you will have nothing with which to reproach yourself, for truly, during the last six weeks we have done nothing

but post day and night, from Framberg to Strasburg, from Strasburg to Paris, and from Paris back to Framberg."

"If we can but attain the object of our journey!"

"If I only had a bottle of good wine to dispel the numbness of my limbs; but we can get nothing; not even a glass of thin wine to appease the thirst which consumes me. O Colonel, only for your sake would I endure patiently so much discomfort."

"Are you sorry that you came with me, Mullern?"

"I would go to the end of the world with you, Colonel; but I should wish, at least, not to do so without eating or drinking."

Here the conversation was interrupted by a tremendous shock, which broke the axle-tree of the post-chaise, and Colonel Framberg and his travelling companion both rolled into a ditch which bordered the road. This accident was due to the fact that the postilion had not, owing to the rapidity of his course, noticed the ditch into which our travellers had fallen.

While the postilion was occupied with his horses, Mullern ran to pick up the colonel.

"Thousand million of cartridges! are you wounded, Colonel?"

"It's nothing, Mullern; it's only my left leg which pains me a little."

"Hang it! You're tremendously bruised."

"It is nothing, I tell you. Let us try to discover some place where we can pass the night, for I see very well that we must renounce the hope of arriving at Strasburg today."

The postilion came running to tell the gentlemen that there was an inn about fifty paces from them.

"You scoundrel! to dare to upset Colonel Framberg in a ditch," said Mullern to the postilion.

The latter excused himself as best he could, and they took their way to the inn, supporting the colonel by the arms.

Our travellers had walked but a few minutes when they saw an unpretentious but pretty little house. It comprised a groundfloor, a first story, and some attics, and was provided with green shutters to ward off the sun. A cluster of oaks shaded the entrance, and everything about it indicated that its master, tired of the pleasures and noises of the city, had retired to this solitude for rest and meditation.

"You call that an inn?" said Mullern to the postilion; "I believe, triple thunder! that you want to make the colonel walk."

"Let us knock, at any rate," answered the postilion; "we shall see better what it is when we are inside."

Mullern rapped a double knock at the door. No answer. He knocked again; but still there was no response. To complete the awkwardness

of the situation, darkness came on rapidly, and Colonel Framberg's wound, irritated by fatigue, began to pain him horribly.

"The devil's in this, colonel; you can't sleep in the open air in your condition. Since the people in the house are deaf, we must try to manage without them."

So saying, Mullern violently kicked in the window of the groundfloor which was nearest to the door. The shutter, which was not in condition to sustain such an assault, broke and fell at his feet. He then broke two panes of glass with his sabre, and entered the house without paying any attention to the orders of his colonel, who pointed out to him that he should not thus violate people's rights, and that if any one saw him they would be more likely to take him for a highway robber than for a sergeant-major of cavalry.

Without pausing in his enterprise, Mullern ran to the entrance, found a large key hung on the door, took it down, opened the door without difficulty, and introduced Colonel Framberg into the abandoned house.

"Now that we are inside," said the colonel, "let us try to conduct ourselves circumspectly."

"That's it, Colonel, give your arm to this awkward postilion, and I'll precede you so as to warn you in case of accident."

Our travellers proceeded, groping their way, for the darkness was so intense they could not

discern a step before them. They had already passed through several of the rooms when something passed before them and fled lightly at their approach. Mullern, puzzled, without pausing to think, ran after this object, but his feet caught in a footstool, he lost his equilibrium and fell with his head in a bucketful of water. He rose angrily, opened a door, and, thinking he was walking on the level, rolled from the top to the bottom of some stairs, drawing with him in his fall an unfortunate cat, which was the innocent cause of all this rumpus. However, though half stunned by his rapid descent, Mullern arose and proceeded, this time more carefully, to examine the place into which he had tumbled. The dampness of the atmosphere, and several bottles which he felt under his hand, soon apprised him that he was in the cellar. Reassured by this discovery he sought the stairs which he had descended so rapidly, that he might go up again to announce his success to the colonel; but for the third time his feet caught in something, and he fell with his face on the nose of an individual who was tranquilly sleeping, and who gave utterance to a terrible shout on being awakened so suddenly.

CHAPTER II

The Counts von Framberg. Clémentine

We must not pause to draw our friend Mullern from the embarassment caused by his new adventure until we have performed an obviously necessary task in informing the reader as to the identity of Colonel Framberg, and in dilating upon the motive which had occasioned his hurried journey.

Count Hermann von Framberg, the colonel's father, was descended from an ancient German family. From father to son, through many generations, the Frambergs had passed their youth in serving their country as officers in the army. Count Hermann, following the example of his forefathers, having plucked the laurels of glory on the field of honor, had retired to his ancestral estates, and there, with a dearly beloved wife, had impatiently awaited the birth of their child to complete his happiness. The moment arrived, but the day of joy was turned into one of mourning and affliction; the countess died in giving birth to her son.

The count was never entirely consoled for his loss, but as time softened the bitterness of his

anguish he remembered that he had a son, and ardently gave himself up to the care of his education, which resembled that of his ancestors. Young Framberg early excelled in military exercises; his father saw with joy the taste which he evinced for the profession of his forebears, and at the age of fifteen the young man asked permission to enter the army. The count, although regretting the separation from his son, consented to this request, and young Framberg left the house of his fathers, and in a short time rose by his brave conduct to the rank of colonel.

Count Hermann was proud of such a son, and when Colonel Framberg came to make his winter quarters at his father's castle, he was received with all the military honors, as well as with paternal tenderness.

It was on the battlefield that the colonel had made Mullern's acquaintance. That brave hussar was conspicuous for his courage, and even more so for the singularity of his humor; he had all the frankness and bluntness of a good soldier; always ready to risk his life for a person whom he loved, he would have gone round the world in order to punish one who had affronted him. He revered his colonel as his superior, and loved him as the bravest man in the army; in every battle he was at the colonel's side, fought before him and often made a rampart for him with his body; and had anyone given his life to save the colonel's,

the good Mullern would never have forgiven his depriving him of the honor and pleasure of so doing.

The colonel, for his part, became more and more attached to Mullern. Soon they became inseparable, for the colonel, educated in camps, knew nothing of the distinctions which rank and fortune impose in society. The one whom he loved, although without wealth or title, was none the less estimable in his eyes, if he possessed qualities which made his friendship desirable. In a word, the colonel was above all prejudice, and frequently ruptured social convenances, as the sequel of this history will demonstrate.

Count Hermann, as he became old, ardently desired that his son should give him an heir to his name, and on each visit which the colonel paid to the castle, where for a long time past Mullern had accompanied him, the old count renewed his entreaties that his son would marry. But the pursuit of glory alone occupied the colonel's mind, and he refused to gratify his father's wishes, until, on attaining his thirtieth year, his warlike ardor became a little diminished, and he consented to yield to the count's desire.

About half a league from Count Hermann's castle the domains of Baron von Frobourg were situated. The baron was a widower, and lived a retired life in his castle, occupied with the education of his only daughter, little Clémentine, who

was the idol of her father, and the object of his dearest hopes.

The count and the baron, being near neighbors, early became intimate, and passed their time alternately at each other's houses, and during the winter evenings they conversed; one recounting the military achievements and the glory with which his son had embellished his old age, the other detailing the infantile graces of his daughter, her filial love, her sensitive feeling for the unfortunate, and his hope that one day, possessing the beauty of her mother, she would also possess her virtues. However, time passed, and the count imparted to the baron his desire to see his son married, and the baron confided to his friend the fears which agitated him when he reflected that, if he should die, he would leave his daughter alone in the world, without a friend to protect her or a husband to cherish her. These confidences led to an inevitable result; the count and the baron formed the project of uniting their children. By this means they welded more firmly the friendship which united them, and put an end to all the anxiety which incessantly troubled their old age.

It was at this epoch that the colonel yielded to his father's desires, and the latter conducted him to the baron's castle that he might become acquainted with his future wife.

The colonel, in his frequent visits to his home, had already seen Clémentine, but what a differ-

ence! she had been a child then, and time had not developed all her graces. When the count presented his son to her as her future husband, she was eighteen years old; she was pretty without being beautiful; but her every movement awakened delight; her big black eyes had a most tender and languorous expression, and the enchanting accents of her voice stirred the hearts of those who listened to her with the deepest emotion. Clémentine's character did not belie the sweetness of her expression; she was endowed with every good quality, but she carried her sensibility to an excess. This feeling, when she possesses too much of it, is often the cause of a woman's misfortune, and sometimes leads her much farther than she wishes or intends.

The colonel, on seeing Clémentine, experienced that secret delight which the presence of a charming woman occasions, and he ardently hoped that he should soon call her his wife; not that he felt for her the violent passion which is capable of every sacrifice in order to possess the beloved object. Colonel Framberg, educated in the camp, had never known love, and his brusque frankness was rather that of a friend than that of a lover; but he was proud of his father's choice, and gratified in that he was able to reconcile his desires and his duty.

As to Clémentine, when the old baron apprised her that she must consider Colonel Framberg as

her future husband, she turned pale, she was distressed, and she threw herself at her father's knees and begged him not to force her to leave him. The baron told her that he would always live with her. Besides, it was necessary that she should have a protector, a second father, to replace him when he should go down to the grave, and he could not find a man worthier to fulfil all these duties than Count Hermann's son. Finally, the baron told his daughter that he had placed his dearest hopes on this marriage, and that she would sadden his old age if she refused to obey him. Clémentine was silent, tried to hide her fears, and promised her father that she would comply with his wishes; however, she obtained from the baron a delay in order, said she, that she might have time to become acquainted with her future husband, and it was decided that they should be married at the end of three months.

Whence came Clémentine's trouble on learning of her approaching marriage? If the colonel had not that soft and tender tone which one desires in a lover, at least, he was possessed of the most excellent qualities; besides, the pleasure of obeying her father should have enabled Clémentine to contract the marriage he had proposed for her without sorrow. There must be, then, some secret motive which disturbed her peace of mind. What that was, we shall learn, without doubt, in the following pages.

Not far from the baron's castle, in a modest little cottage surrounded by a pretty garden, and situated on a hill from whence one could view the rich domains of the Frobourgs, lived Clémentine's old nurse, who had always evinced for her charge the tenderness of a mother, and had lavished upon her all her care. For her part, Clémentine loved Nurse Germaine, and never passed a day without going to see her.

One beautiful evening in spring Clémentine left the castle to go to the cottage. The weather had never been so beautiful; a soft and pure air intoxicated the senses, and the declining sun seemed to leave with regret the scene to which he had lent his dawning glory.

Clémentine, led by an irresistible desire, went deep into the woods through which it was necessary to pass in order to reach Germaine's cottage. Presently, feeling tired, she seated herself at the foot of a tree, and gave herself up to the sweet reflections inspired by the silence of her resting-place. She had been seated thus for some time when a gun was fired sufficiently near to dispel her revery. She turned quickly and saw a young huntsman. The young man remained motionless at the sight of Clémentine and, in place of excusing himself for the fright he had caused her, did nothing but look at the charming person who was before his eyes.

Clémentine was the first to perceive the singu-

larity of their position, and was about to depart when the young man, running to her, retained her gently by the arm.

"Why, mademoiselle, have I frightened you?"

"It was not you, monsieur, it was your gun?"

"Pray excuse me. I had not seen you, and certainly had I been aware of your presence I should no longer have found it possible to shoot."

"I am sorry, monsieur, to have disturbed your pleasure."

"O mademoiselle, I would willingly give up all other pleasures for the one which I feel at this moment."

Clémentine blushed, the young man remained silent, and they again stood motionless before each other. It was growing dark, however, and Clémentine turned to leave.

"You are going, mademoiselle?"

"Yes, monsieur, night is approaching, and it is time for me to return to the castle."

"Mademoiselle lives at the Castle von Frobourg?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Will mademoiselle permit me to conduct her home?"

"It is unnecessary, monsieur, I know the way very well."

So saying, Clémentine lightly departed, leaving the young man to follow with his eyes her passage through the skirts of the wood. Clémentine

entered the castle all out of breath. It was the first time that she had passed a whole day without visiting her nurse. She forgot everything in thinking of the meeting in the woods; in vain she tried to drive from her mind the idea which occupied it. The image of the young hunter presented itself unceasingly to her mind, and filled her thoughts with an uneasiness which she could not explain.

The next day Clémentine started from the castle at the same hour as on the previous evening, to visit nurse Germaine's cottage. However, despite her secret desire to again meet her unknown acquaintance, she refrained from loitering in the woods, and went straight to her nurse's dwelling. The good old woman, after scolding her young lady for not coming as usual on the preceding day, made her sit down, and invited her to partake of some fruit and some milk. Clémentine was not in her usual calm and cheerful frame of mind; a secret uneasiness agitated her, a new feeling had been awakened in her breast. Her good nurse perceived the change in her manner and asked her what could be the cause of it, and Clémentine, who had nothing to hide, told of her meeting of the evening before and of the subject which occupied her, things which any other than she would never have dared to relate. While it is true that kindness and familiarity lead to confidence, it is often the respect which one

bears to his parents which is the cause of one's restraint towards them.

Germaine, who saw nothing singular in this meeting, and did not foresee its consequences, was astonished at Clémentine's agitation. They were still speaking on this subject when somebody knocked at the door. A beating of the heart warned Clémentine that the knock was for her. Germaine opened the door and the young man of the wood came into the cottage. He smiled on seeing Clémentine, who blushed and trembled. Nurse Germaine, astonished, stood agape, looking at the pair, and still holding the door half open, not knowing whether she should be silent or speak.

As a slight pretext for his visit, he told Germaine that the hunt had drawn him out of his way towards the close of the day, and that he was greatly embarrassed as to what he should do, when happily he saw the cottage. He begged her to be kind enough to give him a little milk and some fruit, having, he said, taken nothing since the morning. Then he turned towards Clémentine and bowed timidly to her, saying that he was happy that chance had permitted him to meet her again.

Clementine smiled in her turn, for a secret feeling caused her to divine that it was not chance which had led the young hunter there. As to Germaine, she understood that this was the one

whom her young lady, for so she designated Clémentine, had met the evening before, and she said to the young man that he could not have arrived at a more opportune moment, for Clémentine was speaking of him when he knocked. The young man looked tenderly at the young girl, Clémentine blushed; and Germaine, still more astonished, looked at them both. However, little by little, their constraint disappeared, confidence was established, and the young man, who greatly desired that he should be no longer a stranger to Clémentine, told them that he was French, that his name was D'Ormeville, that he had early lost his parents, and that, having but a small fortune, he had entered the service; that after fighting for some time with the French troops, he had had an affair of honor with one of his comrades, they had fought, and he had killed his adversary. The family of the latter was rich and powerful, D'Ormeville was without fortune and without protection, and had been compelled to fly in order to save his life. He had gone to Germany with the design of entering the Emperor's service, and during this journey had stopped for some time in a village situated near the baron's castle, and, while enjoying the pleasures of the chase, he had met the charming Clémentine.

The baron's daughter asked him with interest, if he was now assured of his safety. D'Ormeville answered that since he had been in Germany he

had feared nothing, and he added that his greatest desire was now to dwell for a long time in the place where she lived.

Thus this accidental encounter was the source of much evil to Clémentine. D'Ormeville obtained, at first with difficulty, permission to conduct Clémentine a part of the way home; in truth, Germaine was always with them, but is the presence of a third person sufficient to prevent the birth of love?

Clémentine did not fail to go every evening to the cottage, and, for his part, D'Ormeville was just as punctual. Nurse Germaine saw no harm in these young people, who were so congenial to each other, being often together; besides, D'Ormeville's kind and engaging manners had gained her friendship, and nobody, so she said, was better suited to her young lady.

Our young people soon understood each other. The language of the eyes no longer sufficed them, and one day, while Germaine was in the garden, D'Ormeville threw himself at Clémentine's feet and confessed his passion.

Had he not already divined what she would answer? They swore mutually that they would live for each other always, and that they would never cease to love. However, destiny, which does not always accord with our desires, seemed bound to cross those of our lovers. Clémentine confessed to D'Ormeville that her father did not like the

French, and that he would not readily consent to their union; D'Ormeville told her that he was going to enter the German army, and that that circumstance would perhaps incline her father more favorably towards him. Clémentine believed him; one believes so easily that which one wishes.

However, time passed and D'Ormeville, who should already have been with the army, could not resolve to separate from Clémentine. Every evening, seated around a table with Nurse Germaine, who listened to their talk, the young people enjoyed the sweet pleasure which one tastes in being near the beloved object, and all three of them, ordinarily, walked together as far as the gate of the castle park, where Clémentine left them, promising to return the next day.

One day it happened that Germaine, feeling ill, could not accompany Clémentine on her return. It was late; they had forgotten, while conversing on love, that the time was passing, and Clémentine could not return alone; it was necessary that she should accept D'Ormeville's escort. The evening was superb, and recalled to the young lovers the day of their first meeting. In passing near the wood they paused, a thousand delightful sensations seized their hearts. D'Ormeville pressed his sweetheart to his breast, Clémentine allowed him to caress her, and they both forgot the world and its convenances and dreamt of nothing but love.

As, unfortunately, the greatest pleasure is that which soonest fades, the illusion was dissipated, the feelings were calmed, and Clémentine saw with horror the abyss into which she had fallen. However, D'Ormeville was near her, he calmed her grief, dried her tears; that is so easy to a lover. Clementine smiled; when love remains after gratification one is still happy.

It was, however, necessary that they should separate; that was the cruelest part. At last Clémentine reëntered the little gate of the park, but how she trembled in passing through the apartments of the castle; with what embarrassment she met the author of her being. Ah, had the baron been but twenty years of age! But our parents are not, like us, in the passionate time of life, and that is why it is easy to hide from them that which agitates us.

The longer our lovers made love, the less D'Ormeville dreamt of departing, but at last a very natural, though very unexpected event, recalled him to his duty. Clémentine perceived that she was to become a mother. This news, which filled D'Ormeville with joy, made him, nevertheless, feel that it was time that he should take his part in the world. They agreed that D'Ormeville should immediately leave for the army. War was about to be declared between Russia and Austria; this was his opportunity to distinguish himself. Clémentine was to write to D'Ormeville all that

took place at the castle. They hoped that he would return before the birth of Clémentine's child, and on his return the lovers intended to throw themselves at the baron's feet, confess their fault, and obtain his forgiveness. This plan once settled, they thought of nothing but its execution. D'Ormeville parted from his sweetheart, not without shedding many tears, and Clémentine felt her strength abandon her as she parted from the one whom she regarded as her husband.

CHAPTER III

A Man in a Thousand. Henri's Education

It was some two months after D'Ormeville's hasty departure when the Baron von Frobourg announced to his daughter that he had arranged for her marriage, and that he desired her to look upon Colonel Framberg, the son of his old friend, as her future husband.

What could Clémentine say? what argument could she advance against the baron's proposition. She feared her father too much to dare to confess the fault of which she had been guilty, and we have already seen that all she could obtain was a delay of three months. She went to weep on the bosom of her good nurse, to whom she had long since confided all her grief. Old Germaine was helpless in the matter, and could do nothing except bid her take courage; but, to complete her misfortune, for nearly a month Clémentine had received no news whatever of D'Ormeville. What could have happened to him? was he a prisoner? had he been killed on the battlefield? All these alarming ideas served to awaken her keenest anxiety, and could only render her situation more terrible.

One evening when Count Hermann and his son were at the baron's, Mullern came in to give his colonel some news of the last engagement.

"Well, Mullern," said the colonel, "what is there new?"

"Why, Colonel, the enemy has had a pretty beating."

"Are you certain of that?"

"Yes, Colonel, an old Frank who comes from the army told me about it. Triple cartridges! He said that the affair was very hot, the enemy made a valiant defence; at first they routed us, and of all the First Company of the 36th Hussars, not one escaped."

"What do you say?" cried Clémentine, "not even the officers?"

"O my God, not one! all of them remained on the field."

Clémentine heard no more, she fainted. They ran to help her, while Mullern, excited by the story of the battle, did not perceive the shock he had caused.

They carried Clémentine into her room, where she recovered her consciousness only to give herself up to the most bitter grief. It was in the First Company of the 36th Hussars that D'Ormeville had served; and the news she had now learned, added to the silence he had kept for so long a time, easily persuaded her that he had ceased to live. In truth, after this time no news

of D'Ormeville reached Clémentine, who passed her days in tears and in thinking of the one she had lost.

The three months' delay accorded to Clémentine was about to expire. She knew, also, that she would soon be a mother, and every day added to the embarrassment of her position. It was necessary to make some move, and Clémentine determined to take the only means which remained to taste, not happiness, that she had renounced since the death of him whom she adored, but at least the tranquillity and peace of mind of which she had been deprived for a long time.

Colonel Framberg's character, which Clémentine had fully appreciated, had inspired her with the idea of confessing to him her fault, and confiding in his generosity. One day, a short time before the date fixed for their marriage, Clémentine begged Colonel Framberg to grant her a moment's conversation, to which the colonel willingly consented. They went together into a retired part of the park, and there Clémentine confided to him her love and her misfortune. The colonel was stunned with amazement when Clémentine informed him that she was about to become a mother.

"Is it possible, madame," said he, "you whom I should have believed the most innocent of women?"

He paused; Clémentine colored with shame.

"Oh, forgive me, madame," said he, "I know nothing of love and am ignorant of the faults caused by it. But speak, give your orders, what do you desire of me? Your confidence deserves all my respect, it is a proof of your esteem for me, and I will prove to you that if Colonel Framberg cannot be your lover, he will at least, merit your friendship."

Clémentine, emboldened by this speech, told him that she had confided herself to his generosity, and that it was he who should decide her fate.

"Well, madame, since that is what you desire, if you will consent to it, we will change none of our plans. If he who possessed your love were still living, I should never propose to be your husband, that would be condemning you to eternal regret, but he is no more and you are to be a mother; your child will need a father. I will stand in that place to him, and I shall always have the same love for him that I should have for my own son."

"And you really consent to marry me, Colonel? Do you forget that prejudice, honor even, forbids this marriage?"

"I have no prejudice, and my honor, madame, is to help the unfortunate, and to act as a father to the orphan. It is for this reason that I wish to be your husband; and if, later on, anyone should blame my conduct, they cannot deprive me of the satisfaction of having acted as a gentleman."

"Oh, Colonel, what being could be bold enough to censure the conduct of a man who pleases himself only by doing good?"

"Besides, madame, since the convenances demand it, I will answer to you that the most profound secrecy shall cloak this event."

Thus ended the conversation, and a week later Clémentine became the colonel's wife. Had she not known D'Ormeville, this marriage would have made her happy, but the remembrance of him came incessantly to trouble her peace, and she fell into a deep melancholy which she tried in vain to hide from her husband. A month after the marriage Count Hermann died. Colonel Framberg grieved for his father as a tender son, and passed his time shut up with his wife, seeing no one but Mullern. It was at this epoch that the countess brought into the world a child, who was secretly baptized under the name of Henri d'Ormeville, but who was brought up by the colonel, and who passed as his son.

Old Baron von Frobourg, who was then at his castle, had no knowledge of this event, and he died a short time after his daughter's marriage without having discovered her secret.

Mullern was the only one who divined the truth, but he kept his reflections to himself, and said nothing to the colonel of that which he thought.

Little Henri became his mother's idol; in his

features she retraced those of the man to whom she had given her love. Had Clémentine had the happiness of bringing up her son, it is probable that our young hero would have possessed her sweet and loving qualities; but she died when he was not quite four years old, and was wept and regretted by all who knew her.

Colonel Framberg, heartbroken at the death of his wife, was compelled in order to distract his grief to absent himself for some time from the castle. He resolved to return to the army, but as little Henri had become very dear to him he wished to leave him with some one who would assiduously watch over his youth, and early inculcate virtuous principles. It was Mullern whom the colonel chose for this employment. He knew the former's loyalty and frankness, and sure that he would not leave his son — for it was thus that he called Henri — for an instant, he did not hesitate to make him the child's preceptor.

Mullern would much rather have followed his colonel to the army than have remained quietly at the Castle von Framberg, but as the wishes of his superior were paramount to him, he swore that he would faithfully fulfil them. The colonel then left the castle, leaving Mullern to govern it in his absence, and requesting him to make of Henri a brave and virtuous man.

Let us see how Mullern filled the office which was confided to him, the education of Clémen-

tine's son. He began by establishing himself in rooms next to those of his young pupil, and at dawn each day he went into Henri's room, drew him suddenly from his bed, dressed him, and took him out for a walk in the country, thinking that this exercise would render his pupil stronger and more robust.

On their return they breakfasted on some cold meat and wine, Mullern thinking that that would be better for the constitution than all the teas and coffees in the world. Perhaps he was not wrong, but I think at bottom that he was not reluctant to profit himself by this mode of breakfasting. After breakfast Mullern confided his pupil, for two hours only, to an old tutor who lived in the castle, and who was required to teach him writing and the languages. Mullern always recommended Henri not to rack his brains with the study of the sciences, because he thought it was more necessary for him to know how to draw his sword than to speak Latin; and the young man, sure of Mullern's approbation, sometimes threw his books at M. Bettemann's head, saying that they wearied him, and that he would much rather learn to fight. M. Bettemann scolded, but Mullern was delighted, and always put M. Bettemann in the wrong.

When this lesson was finished, Mullern seized Henri, led him into the court, placed him on a horse, and made the animal gallop for an hour

around the entrance to the castle. Thus, at ten years old, little Henri understood horses better than he understood the rudiments of grammar.

After this little diversion they passed to another still more important. It was necessary that he should exercise in fencing, in order to become a distinguished swordsman. It was in this occupation that Mullern excelled, and when he was satisfied with his pupil, he rewarded him by excusing him from his lesson with M. Bettemann on the next day.

After fencing they all three went to the table, and Mullern believed on principle in remaining there as long as possible, this being the only thing in which he agreed with M. Bettemann, who had the honor of dining with the gentlemen because Mullern was glad to find someone who could drink with him, while waiting until his pupil was big enough to get tipsy in his company.

Ordinarily after dinner these gentlemen were fit for nothing. M. Bettemann, in endeavoring to rival Mullern, always finished by disappearing under the table; and Mullern, having no longer anyone to talk to, went to sleep in the chimney corner, after smoking his pipe and singing a little military refrain. During the slumber of his preceptors, Henri did as he pleased, having nobody to watch him. He ran about in the house and gardens, went into the stable, untied the

horses, mounted them without saddle or bridle, and ravaged the garden by galloping to right and left in the paths, on the grass and in the spinach beds, in spite of the gardener's shouts, who was in despair at seeing that his vegetables would never come to maturity. One day, however, tired of seeing M. Henri destroy every evening his morning's work, the gardener resolved to revenge himself. Having laid his plans well, he bought some crackers, which he placed at the foot of a tree in a beautiful path which M. Henri was pleased to devastate very often, and making a train of powder from it to a bush where he hid himself, he tranquilly awaited the enemy, ready to apply the fire at the moment when he passed, very certain that at the sound of the explosion, the horse would play some trick with his rider.

The event justified all the gardener's hopes. As soon as Henri saw M. Bettemann under the table and Mullern asleep, he softly went down into the courtyard, ran to the stable, untied the best horse, and mounted his back, promising himself that on this day he would do even more damage to the borders and flower beds of the garden, than he had done on any preceding day. He then galloped towards the fatal path, but oh, unexpected misfortune! the explosion took place, the horse reared and threw his rider, who was himself too much frightened at the sudden sound to hold firmly on to his mount, and who was

flung to a distance of ten feet. The people of the castle came running at the cries of their young master, the gardener being one of the first to present himself. Someone ran to wake Mullern, and the latter, affrighted at the cries which came to his ears, suddenly overturned the table on M. Bettemann, and descended as quickly as possible to Henri's succor.

Our young man was more frightened than hurt. Except a few bruises he had nothing to cry for. However, questioned as to the cause of his fall, he told Mullern what had happened to him; and Mullern furious that anyone should have dared to make a snare for his pupil, swore that if he should discover the clown who had done it, he would take from him all desire to do such a thing again. All the servants protested their innocence, and everyone went into the castle, chatting about the event.

But another surprise was there prepared for them. At the foot of the stairs Mullern heard confused shouts coming from the room where they had dined. He went up four steps at a time, and found M. Bettemann floundering under the table between the bottles and plates, making every effort to withdraw his head from a punch bowl. He did so, finally, with the help of Mullern, though he was obliged to leave his wig in the burnt brandy. Peace being a little restored, everyone parted to go to bed.

Henri, somewhat chastened by his fall from the horse, for a time was a little more peaceable in his conduct, and contented himself with galloping around the court. The gardener felicitated himself on the success of his stratagem, and saw with delight his vegetables left to grow.

However, the effect of the fall wore off, little by little, and Henri began to be tired of the narrow limits of his ride. At last, his bruises being cured, he betook his way to the garden, and began to play the devil with the poor gardener. Mullern, who had not forgotten the affair of the crackers, and was extremely desirous of knowing who had placed them, was not long in conceiving a strong suspicion against the gardener, whose reiterated complaints had sufficiently shown his vexation. He resolved therefore to watch our man, and to endeavor to assure himself of the truth of his suspicions. The occasion was not long in presenting itself; the gardener, impatient at seeing that his remonstrances were without effect, resolved to renew his expedient, that he might altogether disgust young Henri with his horse riding, and this time, as he had no desire to repeat the experiment, he thought there would be no harm in tripling the dose in order that the detonation might be more efficacious.

But how could he do it? The little powder which he had been able to procure in the castle had been burned in the first explosion. On re-

flection he thought that Mullern must have in his room a quantity more than sufficient for the execution of his plan, and he resolved to profit by the momentary absence of the hussar to take as much as was necessary for his purpose. Mullern soon came downstairs, and perceiving our man prowling around the castle, he pretended to depart without suspecting him; but after taking a few steps he softly turned and followed the gardener. The latter entered the room, took the quantity of powder which he wanted, and regained the garden, laughing in his beard at the new trick he was about to play our hussar's pupil.

But Mullern had seen all, and having acquired convincing proofs of the gardener's plot, he promised to draw therefrom a striking vengeance. Having well meditated his plan, he left the gardener to prepare everything to render an explosion effective, and waited impatiently the time for its execution.

At last the moment so much desired by the gardener and Mullern arrived. The former, having carefully prepared his fireworks, went to hide in the bush from whence he should put fire to the match. He had not long to wait. The gallop of a horse was heard. It drew nearer, and he immediately set fire to the train of powder. But, O surprise! O despair! he leaped far from his bush, raised by the force of the explosion, and fell on the grass, uttering shrill cries.

One cannot doubt that it was Mullern who had

cut the train of powder by another train, which ended at the bush where the gardener was hid, and which Mullern had arranged in such a manner as to take from him all desire to make other people jump.

As for the horse that had galloped by, he was unmounted. Mullern had taken care to warn his pupil of the snare which had been laid for him.

"So rascal, it was you, was it who wished to make your young master jump, because it pleased him to furrow your spinach with his horse's hoofs?"

"But Monsieur Mullern, it was for M. von Framberg's good I did it. What will our master say when he finds his garden in such a state."

"You should know, scoundrel, that my colonel loves his son much better than his vegetables, and that it is not for you to restrain him."

The gardener held his peace and went hobbling to his cottage, consigning young people, horses, and hussars to the devil. As to Mullern, proud of the success of his plan, he celebrated his victory glass in hand, and this time M. Bettemann passed the night under the table.

CHAPTER IV

The Farm and the Hayloft

Our hero's youth passed in the manner we have described until he attained the age of fifteen years. He continued to annoy and enrage all the inhabitants of the castle with his heedless tricks; but he had a perfect seat on horseback, and was nearly as good a swordsman as his master. Mullern swore by his mustaches that his pupil would yet do him honor.

At this period Henri looked a great deal older than he was, his physical appearance was that of a man, and his passions were even more fully developed than his physique. He was tall, well-built, his features were noble, his face was candid and agreeable in its expression, and he was as quick to excuse a fault in another as he was to commit one himself; he was brave, humane, sensitive; but headstrong, violent, impetuous in his desires, brusque in his actions, knowing neither restraint nor moderation. With such a character, he could not fail to evoke both favorable and unfavorable criticism. But life at the Castle von Framberg began to prove very wearisome to our young man, who ardently desired to travel and to

know the world. Every day Mullern inspired him with the hope that the colonel would return and that then they would change their manner of living, but time passed and the colonel did not come.

Henri, tired of riding his horse in the castle grounds, sometimes extended his gallops into the country, coming home only when fatigue forced him to take some repose. Mullern, who was no longer of an age to take pleasure in overworking, sometimes allowed his pupil to take his long rides alone; on condition, however, that he should always get back before night.

One day he started as usual, but the ordinary hour of his return passed and he did not arrive at the castle. Mullern, who was occupied in emptying an old bottle of rum with M. Bettemann, did not at first notice Henri's absence. However, as night advanced he asked if the young count had come in, and they told him no. He then began to feel some uneasiness, but he presumed that Henri, having gone farther than usual, had not foreseen that night would surprise him before arriving at the castle.

However, time passed, midnight struck and Henri did not appear. Mullern could no longer overcome his impatience, and fearing that some misfortune had happened to his dear pupil, he had a horse saddled and mounted, ordering the other servants to start off in different directions in search of their young master.

The weather was gloomy. Mullern allowed his horse to take the first road they came to and pressed his flanks in such a manner that he did not go to sleep. After galloping for a long time without discovering a living being, Mullern finally discerned a light in the distance and immediately directed his course towards it, hoping to learn something of the object of his search.

The light which Mullern had seen came from a little farmhouse sitting in the midst of fields. Mullern knocked rudely at the door and the barking of a great dog alarmed the household.

"Who is that knocking?" demanded a coarse voice from the groundfloor.

"Come, open the door, churl, and you will learn who it is."

"Open the door at this hour! Yes, I daresay, a pretty rogue you must be, to think we're going to let in a robber like that."

"Who are you calling 'robber'? I tell you, churl, that it is an old sergeant-major of cavalry, the tutor of Colonel Framberg's son, who does you the honor to come to your house."

"Come, get out, get away with your humbug!"

"Come, open the door, or I'll force the lock with my sabre."

"Oh, he's armed. Cæsar, Castor — seize him! Seize the rascal."

Saying these words the farmer opened the gate of the yard, and let out his two dogs, which

dashed at Mullern. The latter, furious that this peasant had not more respect for his title and quality, entered the yard on horseback, and with his sabre cut the head of the first dog who came at him, jumped off his horse, and dashed into the room where the farmer was, seeking something on which to wreak his vengeance. But the farmer, fearing to encounter this demoniacal man, fled to awaken the farm men, and the whole household. Mullern, whom nothing stopped, mounted a staircase, and then a second one, and reached the hay-loft; the door was shut. Presuming that his man had taken refuge there, he forced it open, entered, closed it tightly behind him, and groped about examining the place, where the deepest silence reigned. However, on turning the bundles of hay Mullern thought that he heard the sound of broken breathing; he advanced and felt softly around him, and was astonished to find a woman sitting quietly on the hay. How she came there we must inform the reader.

The farmer was a big, rotund man, who had been a handsome fellow in his time; but he was no longer in his first youth, and his wife, who was a chatty woman, of gay and cheerful temperament, finding he was no longer interested in any thing but his business, had become very friendly with her husband's farm hand, and had gone to the hay-loft to enjoy a chat with him, while the farmer was casting up the accounts of the day. On hear-

ing the barking of the dogs, the farm hand had warned his companion that something was passing below. The farmer's wife did not intend to disturb herself for such a trifle; but the young man, not caring to be surprised by his superior, left his sweetheart to go and see what was taking place. Mullern had just made his discovery, when he heard several men mounting the staircase.

"He is there," said the farmer to his men, "I am sure of it. Grosjean get your fork ready, and you, Pierre, take him by the middle of the body."

But Pierre, who was the bachelor in question, fearing that they would only find the farmer's wife in the loft, assured his master that the robber was not there, and that he had seen him escape into the cellar.

"That is all right," said the farmer, who had taken the death of his dog to heart; "still we'll go in, and if he's not here we can look for him elsewhere, afterwards."

While saying these words he began to batter on the door with the fork and broom. The farmer's wife, who recognized her husband's voice, whispered to Mullern to save himself without delay if he did not wish to be strangled by her husband. Mullern asked nothing better than to escape, rightly thinking that all his valor would be of no avail against the number with whom he would have to contend; but whence could he

fly? There was no way of leaving the garret except by the door, which was already guarded, and a window which looked on the yard. To jump out of the window would only be avoiding one peril to fall into another. If he hid himself in the bundles of hay they could not fail to find him. What should he do? Presence of mind was necessary to relieve him from this dilemma. The farmer's wife came to the rescue.

"What is it?" cried she; "my man, is it you who are there?"

"Wait, by jingo! It's Catherine. How did you come up here?"

"Hang it, it's very simple. When I heard the hubbub downstairs, I ran up to the loft for fear of robbers."

"Then the rascal I'm looking for isn't there."

"Do you suppose if he was I should be resting here so quietly? But wait, I'll come and open the door, and you shall see for yourself."

While saying this, the farmer's wife made Mullern hide, and she opened the door.

"Hang it, it's useless for me to look," said the farmer, "since you were here."

"Didn't I tell you I saw him escape into the cellar?" said Pierre.

"Oh, well then, let's go down, boys; I'll go and get my carbine, and, dang it, he'll pass a bad quarter of an hour.

Saying these words they all trooped down to

visit the cellar, and Mullern, who followed behind them, reached the yard, found his horse, mounted, and left the yard at a gallop. As day began to break Mullern thought it would be better for him to return to the castle, in case that Henri had returned during his absence. He could already distinguish in the distance the towers of the Castle von Framberg, when the sound of a horse's feet made him turn his head. He stopped, looked, and perceived Henri, who was coming quietly towards his preceptor.

"Ah, there you are, monsieur, I have found you at last. Isn't this a fine hour to be coming home to bed?"

"And you, my dear Mullern, where are you coming from? Ha, ha, ha! Where have you been among the hay to put yourself in such a state?"

In fact, Mullern, who had not had time to brush himself, was covered with hay from head to foot.

"Where am I coming from, monsieur? Hang it, in running after you I have done some fine business. I have broken into a house, killed the dog, beaten the farmer, and a moment later I should have been strangled, but for the pity of a woman who apparently thought I was too young to die, and who procured me the means of escape."

"Ah, my good Mullern, I am ashamed to be the cause of all that; but what put it into your head to run after me? I am no longer a child; I am big enough to take care of myself."

"Oh, yes, here is a proud man; I should like to know how, in my place, you would have got through this night? But it's no use troubling about that. I hoped, monsieur, that you were going to tell me what you have been doing since yesterday."

"Yes, my friend, you shall know everything, and you will see that I have done nothing wrong."

"I very much doubt it, but never mind, speak!"

"You must know that after riding about the country for a long time, I found myself surprised by night at a great distance from the castle. As I was uncertain of the road I must take to get back, I questioned a peasant who told me I was not more than two leagues from Offenburg. I was, then, nearly six leagues distant from the castle. I was likely to miss my way in returning and I thought it was wiser to go and pass the night in the town. I asked the way of the peasant, he told me and I started; but I had not gone a quarter of a league when I saw a house of humble but respectable appearance. I approached it — and what a surprise — the most melodious sounds came to my ear; a divine music made itself heard, and I remained for an hour motionless before that dwelling, listening to a voice which went right to my heart."

"Oh, the devil!"

"Finally, urged by curiosity, or rather by a

secret feeling which mastered me, I resolved to know the person who had given rise to such delightful sensations in my heart. I knocked, a good old woman opened the door to me. I asked to speak to the mistress of the house, and was introduced into a little drawing-room, where a lady of middle age was occupied in reading; and near her — O my friend, how can I depict to you the most perfect thing in the universe, the most beautiful being formed by nature, an angel, in fact."

"And this angel had made the music?"

"Yes, my friend, that was the person whom I had heard. At my approach she became silent. The old lady rose and asked me what had procured her the honor of seeing me. I told her how I had missed my way without perceiving it. At the name of the Count von Framberg, a benevolent smile animated her face."

"Hang it, I can well believe it."

"She offered me the shelter of her roof until the morning. I expressed a fear of discommoding her."

"However, you remained?"

"I seated myself with these ladies and engaged them in conversation. The young girl seemed timid and reserved, but the old lady was a little gossipy, informing me that they had lived in the house where I found them for a dozen years, alone; that they saw nobody, because Pauline's

father did not like society; that he had then been absent for some time, on business of importance; and that they were impatiently awaiting his return, when they should learn if the end of his journey had been accomplished."

"It seems to me that there is a good deal of mystery here."

"Well, my friend, the night passed while we were chatting thus. As soon as I saw the day begin to break I rose and made my excuses for keeping them up so late."

"And then?"

"I asked permission to again trouble their solitude. The good lady at first made some difficulty —"

"It was necessary to tell her you were my pupil?"

"But at last she consented to receive me sometimes, in order that she might enliven a little the solitude of her dear Pauline, and because she thought the son of Colonel Framberg worthy of such preference. I was at the height of my joy. The young person did not appear to be vexed at the determination of her guardian, and I departed, bearing with me the hope of soon seeing again the one who will henceforth occupy all my thoughts."

"That's very well indeed, monsieur; so at the age of sixteen you are already in love."

"Yes, and for life, Mullern."

"You've profited prettily by the lessons of

wisdom which I have given you. Come, believe me, think no more of this new passion which will lead you to nothing good, but rather make you commit some foolishness, if I do not look out."

"You can't think, Mullern, that I shall ever forget this adorable woman, this woman for whom I would already give my life; have you never loved yourself?"

"Excuse me, monsieur, I have loved glory, wine, and women; as to the latter, however, only moderately; and I have always carefully avoided those grand passions which draw one from one's duties, which make one live like a Don Quixote, and which give one the appearance of an idiot. Believe me, it is only thus that one can be happy, and not in filling the head with dreams which always fail of realization."

"Despite the moral beauty of your discourse, which I esteem very highly, you can't prevent me, my dear Mullern, from believing that true love is the only happiness on earth. What matter if it be a chimera, so long as it renders us happy?"

"Come, I see very well that I shall lose my time in moralizing with you, and I give it up. But at least I could wish that the object of your transport be worthy of it, and that you should not give yourself up to an adventuress, like an apprentice in love."

"Take care, Mullern, you outrage her whom I adore."

"But do you, at least, know her father's name?"

"Certainly, his name is Christiern."

"Christiern! I've never heard that name on the battlefield."

"Nevertheless, he is a military man."

"A military man, that's very fortunate."

"Thus you see that these are ladies who —"

"I see that we are now at the castle and that it is time to go to bed. Truly, monsieur, you lead me a pretty life, a sergeant-major of cavalry to go to bed when everybody is getting up."

"But what prevents you from resting without going to bed."

"Because I am all used up with galloping all night."

"And perhaps with rolling around so much in the hay," added Henri, laughing.

Here Mullern bit his lips and went into his room, fearing lest it was now his pupil's turn to give him some lessons.

CHAPTER V

The Colonel's Reception

For nearly six months after Henri's adventure he repaired every day to the dwelling of his inamorata, notwithstanding Mullern's repeated remonstrances, and the fatigue which these reiterated journeys occasioned him. In enterprises of this nature, however, fatigue counts as nothing, and the remonstrances of parents and friends might as well be uttered to the wind for all the effect they have on the young and ardent lover.

One day, however, on finding Henri still in the castle, Mullern said to him, —

"What! have you not gone yet?"

"No, Mullern," answered Henri, "and I'm not going."

"So your Dulcinea has already played the usual tricks with you, has she?"

"My Pauline is incapable of changing," asserted the young man.

"Has she then told you that she loves you?"

"Do you think that during the six months I have been visiting her our hearts have not understood each other, and our eyes expressed our love?"

"Oh, I see very well that the young lady knows all about it."

"I did not go there this morning because good Madame Reinstard, who stands in the place of a mother to Pauline, has warned me that the latter's father is expected to arrive, from one moment to another, and that he would take offence at my visits unless he were informed as to the beginning of our acquaintance."

"So you will be separated from your lost sweetheart for a long time?"

"For a long time; oh, I hope that some day I shall be able to present myself to her father. He may see me, he may like me."

"And if he is reasonable he will close the door of his house to you."

"You dishearten me, Mullern."

"You see I am not in love, I merely say what I think."

At the end of a fortnight, Henri, no longer able to restrain his impatience, resolved to visit his sweetheart's home, but this time Mullern wished to accompany his pupil, for he greatly desired to see the young lady's father and also to know the young lady herself. Henri would have preferred to go alone, but Mullern declared that it was more in accordance with the usages of society that he should accompany him, and that if Pauline's father was an honest soldier the appearance of an old sergeant-major of cavalry would inspire him with

more confidence than that of a heedless young man. They therefore started together. Henri, urged by his desire to see his sweetheart, put his horse to his topmost speed. Mullern shouted loudly to him that he could not follow him, which was one reason the more that our young man should not stop. Finally, they reached the house, and Henri immediately dismounted. Mullern examined the dwelling, which was of very modest appearance, and discontentedly shook his head. Henri knocked; after some moments an old woman came to open the door, but Henri saw it was not the servant whom he was accustomed to see, and asked, trembling, —

"Is M. Christiern here?"

"He doesn't live here now, he went away about a week ago," she said.

"Good God! and his daughter? and Madame Reinstard?"

"He took his daughter with him, and Madame Reinstard accompanied them."

Henri remained as if struck by lightning. Mullern shouted with laughter.

"Ha, ha! Thousand bombs! I am very much pleased that you should thus be disembarrassed of your beautiful unknown."

"Not so, though she be at the end of the world I will yet find her!" cried Henri, and he began to question the good woman as to the departure of M. Christiern. But he could learn nothing fur-

ther than that the three people who had lived in the house had left without making known the purpose or destination of their journey, and that the person who now dwelt there knew nothing of her predecessors. While saying these words the old woman shut the door and left our travellers on the highway. Henri, in despair, wished to go to Offenburg to scour the neighborhood, and to strain every nerve to find his sweetheart. But Mullern would not hear reason, and obliged him to return with him to the castle. They remained there for some days, Henri thinking of nothing but travel and elopements, and Mullern felicitating himself that the intrigue was thus broken off, when they were apprised that Colonel Framberg would very shortly return to the castle. Mullern was overjoyed; he was about to see his colonel, his benefactor, again. He turned everything upside down that the count might be received in his domain with all the honors which were his due.

All his vassals were put under arms. Mullern exercised them from morning until night, ordering combats and evolutions. M. Betteman himself, who for some time past had had nothing better to do than to get tipsy, was forced to carry a musket, to take part in the exercises, and twice each day to mount guard on the ramparts of the castle, which highly displeased him, but Mullern thought that it was the best way to reform him.

Henri momentarily forgot the girl who had turned his head, and the arrival of his father, whom he had not seen for so long, occupied all his mind. He shared Mullern's activity, and awaited impatiently the time when he should embrace his sire. The much-desired moment arrived at last. M. Betteman, who was acting as sentinel on that day, perceived from afar the colonel's carriage; following Mullern's orders he fired his gun to announce the arrival, and the shock of the fire-arm threw him to the ground. Everyone was soon in motion in the castle. Mullern ran to pick up the sentinel, and to have the drawbridge lowered. All the peasants were ranged in two lines, and Mullern bade them fire all together as soon as the carriage entered the castle gates. M. Bettemann ran to the cellar, that he might not hear this frightful noise, but Mullern, who lost sight of nothing, ran after him and forced him to reënter the ranks, giving him a gun which he assured him kicked less than the other.

Finally the sound of the horses' feet was heard, the carriage passed over the drawbridge, and Mullern gave the signal. M. Bettemann, scared or electrified by this sudden discharge, tried to do the same as the others. But his gun, which had not been used for a long time, burst to fragments in his face, and he rolled howling under the horses' feet. The latter, frightened by the cries of the tutor, galloped right and left in the

court, making the vassals fly before them. Mullern shouted at the top of his voice to rally his troops. Henri ran after the horses which, still further excited by the uproar, galloped faster, and only stopped when they came to a pond in which they overturned the carriage, crushing half a dozen ducks as they fell. Finally, the horses being stopped, Henri ran to raise his father, who had rolled into the pond, but who happily got out of it at the expense only of his grand uniform, which was covered with mud, and having behind him a goose who had sought refuge near him and had attached itself to the back of his trousers. While they were occupied in detaching the goose, which would not leave hold, Mullern came forward with an air of consternation.

"Oh, my dear Colonel, will you deign to excuse me for making such a failure of your reception?"

"It is nothing, my dear Mullern; your intention was good, and that is enough."

"It was all that Bettemann's fault."

"I shall get out of it by changing my clothes."

"And he with the loss of an eye, my Colonel."

"But where is my son? My Henri, come and embrace me."

The young man threw himself into the colonel's arms; the latter looked at him tenderly and exclaimed, "It is she; it is my Clémentine!" and pressed him tenderly to his heart. Henri for his

part felt in his heart the birth of that profound sentiment of respect and recognition which he could not fail to feel towards one whom he regarded as his father. After some moments given to emotion, the colonel thought that he would do well to go and change his dress. He desired Henri to see that everything was restored to order in the castle, and signed to Mullern to follow him to his apartments.

"Well, my dear Mullern," said the colonel when they were alone, "I confided my dear Henri to your care nearly twelve years ago. Since then I have been running about the world fighting the enemy that I might lose the heartbreaking remembrance of the loss of a woman who well deserved my tears and my regrets. And how have you whom I charged specially to form my son's heart passed the time. You have not yet rendered me an account of your troubles and cares, and the manner in which you have endeavored to make of Henri a man for whom I shall not have to blush. Tell me, have you been successful?"

"Yes, Colonel, and proudly successful, I flatter myself. Come, the young man is a jolly fellow who can hold his own."

"How do you mean?"

"That's to say, Colonel, that he will make people talk about him. First he is brave, I will answer for that, and he knows how to handle his

sword. I hope you will see him do so one day, yourself; and that you will compliment me upon him."

"And what more?"

"Well, he is humane, generous, sensitive. Oh, come now, for sensitive—"

"I see that he has all his mother's virtues."

"Yes, Colonel, only I fear that this sensitiveness will draw him too far."

"What do you mean to say?"

"That the young man has a devil of a taste for the other sex."

"Do you think so?"

"Hang it! Do I think so?" Here Mullern stopped, remembering that he had promised Henri to hide his adventure with his sweetheart from the colonel.

"Then, Mullern, you are entirely satisfied with my son."

"Yes, Colonel, very much satisfied. My pupil will do me honor some day, I am sure. Of course, he has also some little faults; first, he is violent, impatient, headstrong."

"Oh, indeed! You never told me that."

"But don't be uneasy, Colonel. His faults will correct themselves as he grows older. When the heart is good, there is always a remedy, and his is good. Oh, I will answer for it, Colonel, as I would for yours. He is worthy to be your son."

"What do you say, Mullern?" cried the colonel, impetuously.

Mullern was disturbed, and rubbed his ear, when he perceived that he had made a slip of the tongue. However, he took courage, and responded, —

"My faith, Colonel! Since the word slipped out, I will not retract it; besides, I cannot dissimulate, and I confess that it bothered me to have something to hide from you, Colonel."

"Well then, Mullern, since you know the secret of Henri's birth, there is no need of further pretence on my part; besides future events will perhaps force me to one day tell him all, and if I should die before revealing this secret to him, I shall not be sorry that some one else knows it. But reflect well, Mullern, that you must never divulge to anyone what I am going to tell you — unless forced to do so by the most imperative circumstances — without my orders."

"Don't be uneasy, Colonel. I have given you my word. You know me, and you know that Mullern is incapable of breaking his oath."

Colonel Framberg then told Mullern all that concerned Henri's birth, as well as the name of his real father, which Clémentine had told him.

Several months passed — Colonel Framberg loved Henri as his son, but he perceived that Mullern's pupil was by no means as perfect as the latter had described him, although Henri's

conduct had been much better since the colonel's return to the castle.

One day Count von Framberg made Henri come to his room and spoke to him in these terms,—

"My dear son, you are beginning to be of an age where a sojourn in an old castle with your father for your only society is not sufficient for you; you are only seventeen years old, but you have the look of a man, and I believe that I can allow you, without fear, to take care of yourself for a time."

"What do you mean, father, by that?"

"My dear boy, I wish to say that you must travel, you must learn to know the world. I went into the army myself at the age of fifteen, so you see I was still younger than you are."

"Are you going to send me into the army then, father?"

"As you do not appear to have any very decided taste for military life, despite the education that Mullern has given you, we will wait till you have a desire for it; but I don't wish you to pass your youth in this castle. You must travel, run about the world; that will fit you for anything you may wish to do."

"And you, father?"

"Why, my dear boy, I'm beginning to be of that age which prefers repose to pleasure; I shall therefore remain at the castle and tranquilly await

your return, well persuaded that your conduct when far from me will never oblige me to go in search of you."

"Dear father, be sure that I shall never forget your lessons."

"In that case we may consider the thing as settled. You shall start in a week; I should have liked very well for Mullern to travel with you, but that good hussar, from whom I have been separated so long, will be the only person who can share my solitude during your absence. Besides, rest is becoming necessary to him also, and he will remain with me. You can take Franck, the gardener's son, as your servant. He appears to be intelligent, and I think that you will be pleased with him."

Henri, delighted at his father's determination, prepared everything for his journey. The memory of his dear Pauline had never been effaced from his mind, and he hoped in the course of his travel to find out what had become of her. The day of his departure arrived, and Henri left the Castle von Framberg accompanied by Franck and well provided with money and all that was necessary to him. The colonel wept as he parted from Henri, and Mullern himself felt some tears roll down his cheeks as he parted with him whose youth he had formed, and for whom he would have given his life.

Eighteen months passed and Henri regularly

sent news of himself, but at the end of that time the letters ceased. The colonel and Mullern, both of whom were alarmed at his silence, did not know what to conclude. At length, the colonel decided to obtain information as to the conduct of his son and learned that he was not so exemplary as he had led them to believe; and that the young man had given himself up to all his passions. At first Mullern took his pupil's part and sought to excuse him to the colonel, repeating that it was necessary to pass his youth and that he, being young, had done better than others. The colonel always ended by being appeased, but soon more important news came and put an end to Mullern's excuses. Some one informed the colonel that his son was at Strasburg with a young person whom he was on the point of marrying. The colonel thought that it was his duty to prevent the foolishness which Henri was about to commit, and decided to start for Strasburg with Mullern.

"The deuce is in him with the women, the foolish young man," cried Mullern, while travelling with the colonel. "I always told him that they would play him some bad tricks; but, zounds! I could sooner have softened a bullet than have made him listen to reason." At last they arrived at Strasburg, where they learned that Henri had left shortly before for Paris. The colonel, without stopping, started for the capital

with Mullern, and on arriving at Paris they were informed that Henri had departed the evening before to return to Strasburg.

"Let us also return?" said the colonel.

"Ah, thousand citadels, my Colonel! I believe that the young man is mocking us."

We have seen how, in a cross road which the postilion had taken in order to arrive more quickly, he had overturned Mullern and his colonel in a ditch, but we do not yet know how Mullern got out of the cellar where we left him, and it is time to go to his help.

"Lord have mercy upon me! Help!" cried the person upon whose nose Mullern had fallen.

"Where are you? Speak!" said the latter, putting his sabre on the man's breast.

"O good God! It's the chief of robbers."

"Why don't you answer, jack pudding, instead of howling? Who are you? and what are you doing there?"

"I'm the porter of this house, and in my master's absence I came down into the cellar, where I went to sleep as —"

"As you were drinking the wine which it held! Oh, I begin to understand, and I would very willingly keep you company in that occupation, but my colonel is upstairs awaiting the result of my researches. I don't wish to leave him lingering there any longer. Come and see if you can't give him a light, and after that, if you wish, we will

come down here, and I will help you to empty several bottles with pleasure."

So saying, Mullern pushed his host towards the stairs. The latter, after picking up his candle, tremblingly followed Mullern, not knowing yet what to think of his adventure.

On reaching an upper room Carll, for that was the name of the porter, lit his candle, without daring to raise his eyes to look at the person who was with him.

"Come, walk before me," said Mullern to him, "that we may find my colonel." After passing through several rooms they came at last to the one in which were the colonel and the postilion, both very uneasy at Mullern's absence.

"My Colonel," said the latter, "here is the only living being in this house, whom I discovered in the cellar."

"Honest man," said the colonel to Carll, "I hope you will excuse the manner in which we have introduced ourselves into this house.

Carll, whom fear had sobered, listened attentively to the colonel.

"You are not robbers, then?" cried he, when the latter had finished speaking.

"Who are you calling robbers?" said Mullern.

"No, my friend," answered the colonel, "we are travellers. I was repairing to Strasburg with this honest soldier when our chaise was overturned

in the ditch, my leg was hurt, and perceiving no other shelter in which to pass the night, we tried to get into this house in the hope that we should there find some one who would help us."

"Oh, if you are travellers, I am at your service, monsieur; my master is away for a few days, and while waiting for him to come back, I will take you to a chamber where you will find a good bed."

"As soon as possible," said Mullern, slapping Carll's shoulder. "This will put me on good terms with you; I see that you are a good fellow, and that we can arrange matters together."

"But," said the colonel to Carll, "you tell me that your master is absent, if he should return are you not afraid that he will scold you for your generous hospitality?"

"No, monsieur," answered Carll, "my master is a singular man, sometimes gloomy and silent, and sometimes very gay and chatty; but for the rest I have always found him humane towards everybody, and I do not doubt that he will approve my conduct in regard to you."

"Why, hang it, even if he's a bear we shall be able to tame him," said Mullern.

The colonel, who greatly needed rest, begged the porter to lead him to the room which he had destined for him, and Carll hastened to obey him. Mullern and the postilion carried the colonel on their arms, for his wound had grown so much

worse that he could no longer stand. The room to which they were led was very agreeably situated, having a view of the garden at the back of the house. The colonel got them to help him to bed and advised Mullern to go to rest also, assuring him that he would call him if he had need of anything.

"Well, my honest fellow," said Mullern to Carll, as they went down from the colonel's room, "although we are devilishly tired, I and this big simpleton here," pointing to the postilion, "who says nothing but who thinks all the more, I believe before going to bed it will do us no harm to have a little supper, for we have had nothing for nearly twelve hours, and I cannot sleep when my stomach is empty."

"Well said," added the postilion, "I am entirely of your opinion."

"In that case I will try to give you some supper, but you will have to eat what there is here."

"Oh, we are not fastidious; in war as in peace, I eat what is given me, but I believe I noticed that the cellar was well furnished."

Carll laughed and they immediately occupied themselves in preparations for their supper.

Everything was soon ready, and they seated themselves at the table. Mullern complimented Carll on his wine, the postilion said not a word, believing he could use his teeth to a better purpose. And the porter, who had a great weakness

for wine and was delighted to find men capable of doing it honor, soon grew good-humored and disposed to chat freely. He set himself to telling his guests how his master lived.

"There never was such a droll man as M. de Monterranville, who passes his life in running about the country travelling, I know not where, or he will shut himself up in his house, where he sees nobody except me and a big devil whom I don't know. He is sometimes sad, sometimes gay, and though for nearly ten years I have lived with him in this dwelling, I cannot yet understand his character nor comprehend the motives of his frequent absence."

"That's because you are not sharpwitted. Triple cartridges! nobody can impose upon me, on seeing a man I can always tell by his eyes what he is."

"Pshaw!" said the postilion, "there are some faces which one can't understand at all."

"Some also are very deceiving," replied Carll.

"All that amounts to nothing, my friends," continued Mullern; "a man may have the greatest desire to hide what is passing in his mind, a penetrating glance of the eye will always discover the truth, and I believe that, despite all the cunning of which certain people are capable, nature has not given the same likeness to a scoundrel as to a virtuous man, and let me only see M. de Monterranville once, and I will soon tell you what he is."

After vaunting for a long time his penetration in reading physiognomies, Mullern perceived at last that his two companions were no longer listening, but were sound asleep. Extending himself at full length on the sofa he was not long in imitating them, and they were soon snoring in unison. Next day the colonel, having passed a very bad night, was in no condition to ride, and his wound, irritated by the fatigue which he had experienced for several days, and by the impatience which heated his blood, assumed a very alarming character. The good Carll, who understood a little about medicine, put a bandage on the leg, and ordered the utmost tranquillity. This made the colonel swear all the more, but he was obliged to submit to necessity.

The postilion started for Strasburg with orders to bring back horses within a short time.

The colonel and Mullern had been a week in the isolated house when the owner returned from his journey. The colonel was in despair at being thus under obligation to a person whom he did not know; but M. de Monterranville, on learning what had passed in his house, praised Carll's conduct very highly, and went up into the colonel's room to assure him of the pleasure he felt in having been useful to him under these vexatious circumstances.

The colonel was in his bed chatting with Mullern about Henri's conduct, when his host came

into the room. The latter approached the colonel's bed, saying that, while he was grieved at the accident which had happened, he congratulated himself that it was in his house they had found succor. While the colonel answered these obliging speeches, Mullern retired to one side and amused himself by examining the features of this new person.

M. de Monterranville was a man of about fifty years, tall, thin, with an olive complexion, and with eyes which were lively and piercing when he looked anyone in the face, but which he ordinarily cast down. His face was rather handsome, and his bearing distinguished. "I don't like this man," said Mullern to himself, after attentively watching M. de Monterranville; "unless I deceive myself, he is not frank in his speech."

As to the colonel he was profuse in his thanks to the owner of the house, and felicitated himself on having fallen into such good hands. The latter left them, begging the colonel to do as though he were in his own house. When he had left, Mullern imparted to the colonel his thoughts regarding their host, but the colonel treated them as visionary, and did not share his opinion.

The room where Mullern slept was exactly opposite that of the master of the house, only as it was a story higher he could distinguish beneath the half curtains which were at the window what was passing in the apartment of the latter. On

entering his room to go to bed Mullern resumed his conjectures on the person with whom they were staying. While reflecting, the hours passed, and he saw by his watch that it was near midnight. He rose to extinguish his candle, and while passing the window perceived a light in M. de Monterranville's room. Curiosity and the desire to see if he could not discover something that would justify his ideas urged him to glance for a moment into his neighbor's room. He extinguished his candle, that it might be thought he had gone to bed, and softly posted himself in the embrasure of his window. He remained for a long time in that position, but saw nothing; tired of uselessly waiting, he was about to go to bed, when he perceived M. de Monterranville striding about his room like a man absorbed in reflection. Then he saw him open his desk, and take therefrom several bags of silver; he examined them, and counted some of them, and then left it all to fall into a revery. Wearied by seeing nothing further Mullern went to bed, ill pleased that he could not understand what all this meant. The next day Mullern watched again, and saw the same conduct on the part of M. de Monterranville, although he did not touch his desk, but he continued to walk slowly up and down, stopping sometimes to wipe his forehead, or throw himself down in an attitude of the deepest despair. Mullern ended by consigning to the devil his host

and his mysterious promenades, and went to bed thinking that M. de Monterranville was a somnambulist or that he had a fit of madness.

However, time passed, and the colonel's wound healed but slowly. Wearied of getting no news of Henri, and seeing that it would be long before he would be able to follow on his traces, he resolved to send Mullern on before to learn what was transpiring, and he made him come into his room that he might impart his plans to him.

"Mullern," said he, when they were alone, "I can no longer restrain my impatience, it is absolutely necessary that I should know what Henri is doing now."

"Thousand bombs, my Colonel! Don't you suppose that I desire to know as much as you do, and don't I fret at seeing you nailed to your bed like an old cannon of forty-eight; but what can we do, Colonel? we must take courage.

"Listen, Mullern, if you are willing, I shall await my cure with more patience."

"If that depends on me, Colonel, you know that you have only to speak."

"Very well, my dear Mullern, you shall go to Strasburg and seek for traces of Henri."

"What, Colonel, you wish that I shall leave you alone in this old demolished citadel?"

"Why not?"

"Having no one for company but a man who resembles an ourang-outang."

" Remember that I shall soon be well and that I can then rejoin you."

" I shall regret leaving you, Colonel; however, since you wish it, I must obey."

" Don't forget, Mullern, that moments are precious; you know what they told us about Henri. — I tremble lest he should be already married."

" As to that, Colonel, he would never dare commit such a folly without your consent; but what am I to do if he has done so?"

" Whatever you think proper. But if, as I hope, it is not so, then do your best to see the one who has captivated our boy's heart, and, above all, don't allow yourself to be deceived by appearances."

" Be easy, Colonel, I am more than a match for them, above all where women are concerned, and the most pronounced prude cannot take me in her snares."

Matters being thus arranged, Mullern mounted, and having recommended his master to old Carll, who loved the colonel, he said good-by, and started off at full gallop on the road which should lead him to his pupil.

CHAPTER VI

A Hayloft Again

Mullern arrived at Strasburg towards nine o'clock in the evening, and entered the White Horse, the first inn he came to on his way.

"Get supper for me immediately, and also feed my horse at once, if you please," said the hussar, going into one of the public rooms of the inn where several travellers were gathered around a table.

"Monsieur shall be served immediately," answered, in a thin, piping voice, a fat, bouncing woman, who seemed to unite in her own person all the different functionaries of an inn.

Mullern approached the hearth, to await as best he could the supper of which he felt in great need, for his ride had sharpened his appetite, and was warming his hands at the cheerful fire when suddenly the travellers and the people of the inn burst into a great shout of laughter as they looked at the new arrival. The latter, who was anything but a patient man, and who was little inclined to allow anyone to laugh at him without informing himself as to their reason for doing so, began to frown and to twist his mustaches and, assuming a stern

expression, said: "May I ask the cause of your merriment, gentlemen?"

"Hang it, you might know well enough we are laughing at you!" answered a man with mustaches, who had a big rusty sword at his side, and looked like a recruiting sergeant or one of those men who seek to dine gratis or to pay for their dinners with fisticuffs.

"Oh, you are laughing at me," said Mullern, measuring him from head to feet, "and pray what do you find laughable in my physiognomy?"

"Look at your breeches behind, and you'll see that we're not laughing at your face."

Mullern immediately examined the garment in question, and found that the friction of the saddle had so seriously impaired them as to disclose a portion of his underclothing.

"Well, what is that to laugh at?" said Mullern to the recruiting sergeant, "anyone would imagine you'd never seen a pair of torn breeches in your life by the way you are laughing at mine."

Jeanneton hastened to interpose between the gentlemen, who were getting heated, by informing Mullern that his meal was ready and leading him to his table, while she whispered in his ear that she would repair his breeches for him. Mullern nodded in response, and ate his morsel of sirloin hungrily, resolving to prove to Jeanneton that he was worthy of her good opinion.

The recruiting sergeant, while eating his cutlet

and smoking his pipe, observed with much ill-humor the attentions which Jeanneton lavished on our hussar, whom she seemed to find greatly to her taste; and the latter, proud of his conquest, turned from time to time to glance at the other with an air which said: "You see I've made more impression, despite my torn clothing, than you with your sheep's eyes."

When bedtime approached, Jeanneton informed Mullern as to the location of his room, and whispered to him that if he would leave his door unlocked she would come and get his garment and repair it.

"Don't fail," said Mullern, "or I'll turn the whole house upside down." Then taking his candle and leaving the recruiting sergeant, who appeared to be asleep by the side of his bottle, he went up to the room assigned him.

He had been there more than an hour, waiting impatiently for Jeanneton to fulfil her promise; however, time passed, and though he had followed her advice on every point she did not come. What could detain her? Unable longer to resist his impatience, Mullern rose, drew on his small-clothes, and resolved to seek Jeanneton in every part of the house.

After traversing, candle in hand, the principal passages and several empty rooms, Mullern went up to the next story to continue his researches. He had already begun to lose hope, when passing

by the open door of the loft he heard a sound within, and believing he should find Jeanneton there he rudely pushed the door open, and for the second time in his life found himself in a hay-loft, and saw before him the recruiting sergeant and an old woman of sixty years.

How the recruiting sergeant came there we must inform our readers. This clown, who had ogled Mademoiselle Jeanneton's charms, had resolved to wrest his conquest from Mullern. In order to do this he had pretended to fall asleep while drinking his bottle of wine, and when Mullern and the other travellers had departed, he seized Mademoiselle Jeanneton, who had all the trouble in the world to get rid of him.

But Jeanneton did not wish to have anything to do with the sergeant, and was only desirous of keeping her appointment with Mullern, she endeavored therefore to escape; as the sergeant followed her, groping in the dark, she mounted several flights of stairs, but he was always behind her, presently, at a turn in the passage, she met an old servant of the house, who was going to bed, Jeanneton pushed her in front of the sergeant and ran off. He seized the old woman by her skirts, and drew her through the first open door, which proved to be that of the loft, believing her to be Jeanneton.

"Thousand thunders!" cried Mullern, as by the light of the candle he carried he beheld the

sergeant's damsel, "I did not give you credit for such a whimsical taste. Don't disturb yourself, my boy. I didn't come to take your fair friend from you."

The sergeant was furious when he saw the form and features of the poor old woman whom he had mistaken for the buxom Jeanneton; Mullern burst into shouts of laughter, which still further augmented his rage.

"Deuce take it!" shouted he; "must this jack pudding always come to stick his nose in my business?"

Mullern, who had greatly desired to punish the sergeant for making fun of his torn breeches, at the name jack pudding applied his foot so dexterously that the sergeant sprawled on the floor. The latter rose and leaped on Mullern, seizing a pitchfork which he found near him; Mullern set down his candle to await his adversary with firm foot, and these gentleman pitched into each other to decide which was the better man. But, unforeseen misfortune, while they were engaged in fisticuffs they did not notice that the candle had set fire to a bundle of hay, and in a moment the loft was all ablaze. The old woman, half suffocated with smoke, made the house echo with her shrieks; everybody got up and ran hither and thither, without knowing why. But soon the flames which issued in volumes from the top of the house warned the spectators of the danger which threat-

ened them. In vain the innkeeper endeavored to save his house; the fire had attained such progress that it was impossible to extinguish it. In the tumult Mullern abandoned his adversary to take to flight; he ran downstairs to his room, but finding it already afire was about to leave it when he heard feeble cries issuing from the depths of it, and returning found poor Jeanneton, who, while awaiting him, had got into bed. Our hussar, who saw Jeanneton about to die for his sake, went through the flames and took her, half dead, and clad only in her chemise, in his arms, and left the inn running with his precious burden.

"Where are we, my friend," said Jeanneton to her liberator, as she came to herself.

"Faith, I don't know where we are," answered Mullern, placing her on a stone bench. "All that I know is that I'm in my torn breeches, and you in your chemise; and as soon as it is daylight we shall see half the inhabitants of Strasburg in contemplation before us."

"I have no desire to wait for them," said Jeanneton. "But has the fire entirely destroyed the inn?"

"I should think so, indeed! At the rate it's going it'll burn the whole town, if they don't take care."

"What can we do? we can't stay here almost naked."

"No, that'll be too risky."

"Ah, an idea has come to me. I've an aunt who is a clear-starcher in this neighborhood, we must go and find her; she's a good soul and will give us a kind welcome."

"So be it, we'll go to your aunt's house."

Behold Mullern and Jeanneton, arm in arm, clad in the scantiest of raiment, proceeding in search of the laundress's house.

After walking for some time they reached a narrow, dirty lane and stopped before an alley-way, for it was here that Jeanneton's aunt dwelt. Mullern gave four raps, which the good woman, who lived on the fourth story, did not hear.

"It's because she's a little hard of hearing and she sleeps like a top," said Jeanneton.

"In that case," said Mullern, "it's a chance but we shall have to get in by the window."

He knocked a second time, then a third; still no answer. Mullern, rendered impatient, was about to throw stones at the windows, when a neighbor on the first floor, awakened by the noise, half opened his window and asked who was knocking in that fashion in the middle of the night.

"It's me, Monsieur Grattelard," answered Jeanneton, "I've come to sleep at my aunt's house, would you open the door for me, if you please?"

"Oh, it's you, Madame Jeanneton, and at this hour?"

"Yes, Monsieur Grattelard, because there's a

fire at the inn where I lived, M. Boutmann's, and I was obliged to escape as best I could."

"My God! is it possible? What are you telling me?"

"What are you doing at the window, Bibi?" said a little squeaky voice, which came from the depths of the alcove in the neighbor's room. It was Madame Grattelard, who, missing her husband from beside her, was rising, very anxious to see what he was doing.

"It's nothing, my little pussy; it's only Mademoiselle Jeanneton, who has come to sleep at her aunt's, and I'm going to open the door for her. But get into bed, my ducky; you'll catch cold."

So saying M. Grattelard closed the window and came downstairs to open the door for Mademoiselle Jeanneton.

"Who is this original?" asked Mullern of the latter.

"It's an old retired pork butcher, who lives on his income, with his chaste better half."

"Thousand bombs!" exclaimed the hussar, "the old fellow seems very much afraid of breaking his neck, for he doesn't hurry himself in coming down."

At last M. Grattelard appeared in his night-shirt and nightcap, with a candle in his hand. On seeing Jeanneton in her chemise he drew up his nightcap and rearranged his night-shirt; but when

he saw Mullern he remained motionless before them, not knowing what to say. In two words Jeanneton told him the whole story, and when he had learned that Mullern was her deliverer, he was no longer astonished that she offered him a shelter.

The three of them went upstairs together and on the landing of the first story met Madame Grattelard, who had desired to assure herself as to the identity of the person for whom her husband had opened the door.

"O heavens! a naked man," said she, perceiving Mullern.

"Go back to bed now, little simpleton," said M. Grattelard. "I'll tell you all about it." But Madame Grattelard, who had also seen the young woman in her chemise, and who feared that her husband might make comparisons between her charms and those of the more youthful Jeanneton, led him towards their own apartments, saying to him that since he had opened the door for them, the visitors had no further need of his services. Jeanneton thanked M. Grattelard, and the married couple returned to their quarters.

Arrived at the laundress' door, Jeanneton and Mullern knocked as though they wanted to break it in; but the good woman awakened and came tremblingly to ask who was there.

"It's me, aunt," answered Jeanneton, "open the door quick."

The old woman was greatly surprised on seeing Jeanneton in her chemise, and a man with her equally destitute of clothing.

But Jeanneton soon informed her of all that had happened, and Madame Tapin, for that was the aunt's name, fell on Mullern's neck and kissed him thrice for having saved her niece. Mullern could have dispensed with these caresses, but it was necessary to submit to them.

Jeanneton and Mullern had great need of rest. Madame Tapin's lodgings consisted only of a large room where she slept and a smaller one at the side where she made a bed for her niece. Mullern declared that he asked nothing better than a chair in which to pass the remainder of the night; as he said this he glanced at Jeanneton, who perfectly understood him, while Madame Tapin consented to all they asked.

The room was soon ready. Jeanneton went to bed, Madame Tapin did likewise, and was soon as fast asleep as before. Mullern then rejoined the one for whom he had set fire to a house, fought a man, awakened the neighbors, etc.

The next day when each one had risen, Mullern thought that a good breakfast was necessary after the fatigues of the preceding night, but Jeanneton had not a sou; Madame Tapin was poor and could offer them scarcely anything but bread and milk. Mullern remembered that he ought to have in his breeches a well-filled purse,

for Colonel Framberg wished him to spare neither trouble nor expense while looking for his son Henri. Joy sprang up again in all their hearts. Jeanneton went to get what was necessary for breakfast and to find a tailor to bring some clothes for Mullern; and Madame Tapin bustled about, preparing the meal. Meanwhile Mullern reflected as to what he should do. He thought he would be just as well off at Madame Tapin's as at the inn, that his lodging there would in no wise interfere with his researches, and the result of his reflections was that he dwelt with Jeanneton the whole of the time that he remained at Strasburg.

They breakfasted gayly; Jeanneton felt nothing but joy at having found in Mullern a man at once so rich and so amorous. By the way, she was a well-meaning girl, this Jeanneton, her only fault being too great a liking for the masculine sex.

Mullern told them in two words what had brought him to Strasburg, and promised to remain with them while he sojourned there. Madame Tapin was delighted; she saw that Mullern loved good wine, and the best of fare, and thought that while he should be in the house she could make what she called "wedding feasts."

After breakfast Mullern went out to begin his search. He traversed almost the whole town without obtaining any information in regard to Henri, and returned in the evening to his Jean-

neton to forget the fatigues of the day. Thus the days passed, and every one was satisfied, only Madame Tapin could not understand how a man like Mullern, who was so fond of good living, could be contented to pass the nights in a chair.

At the end of twelve days or so, Mullern began to believe that the object of his search was not in Strasburg; for though he had scoured the whole town, and visited all the public places, he had not met Henri. He had decided to write to his colonel, to inform him of the nonsuccess of his march, and to ask him what he should do, when one evening, on going into a café, Mullern recognized Franck, Henri's servant, engaged in drinking beer at a table. Mullern refrained from speaking to him, believing that if Franck saw him he would tell him some lie to put him off the scent; he therefore immediately left the café, and patiently waited at the door until Franck should leave, that he might follow him without being seen.

He had not long to wait, in a few moments Franck came out of the café; Mullern followed him in such a manner as to be unobserved by the young man without losing sight of him. Franck threaded several crooked streets, and to Mullern's astonishment soon left the town. But he had not gone far when he stopped before a pretty villa somewhat apart from the other dwellings. He knocked at the door, some one opened, and he went in. Mullern advanced, and exam-

ined the house, so far as the darkness would permit him, and thinking it too late to enter and demand explanations he retired, deciding to return early the next morning.

But having followed Mullern, let us return to our hero, whom we have left for so long a time.

CHAPTER VII

Florence

Upon leaving the Castle von Framberg, Henri and Franck immediately proceeded towards Offenburg. Young Framberg had but one thought in his mind and that was as to how he might best succeed in finding his dear Pauline, and it occurred to him that as she had lived near Offenburg when he had known her, he might perhaps be so fortunate as to learn in that city something as to her whereabouts and her circumstances.

Henri, who was of a confiding nature, and extremely desirous of talking about his sweetheart, as was quite natural under the circumstances, had soon taken Franck into his confidence, and told him of his desire to find the girl who had vanished so suddenly from his sight; and of course it was necessary that Franck should know all about it in order that he might better aid him in his researches.

Franck was an intelligent fellow, shrewd and clever, and better adapted to conduct an intrigue than to weed in the park at Framberg. Flattered by the confidence of his master, he promised to render himself worthy of it, and to do all he could

to help him find the girl he adored. Arrived at Offenburg, Henri and Franck made every possible inquiry in regard to the man Christiern and his daughter, but without the slightest success. Wearied at last of a search which resulted in nothing, Henri resolved to travel in some distant countries in order to distract himself, and to leave to chance the finding of his dear Pauline.

Henri thought that Italy, the beauty of which he had heard greatly extolled, would afford him more distractions than any other country. He therefore started on the way to Naples, travelling on horseback, and stopping in all the places which were worthy his attention. Nothing extraordinary happened until they came to Florence, where Henri desired to pass some time.

The charming situation of this city, on the borders of the Arno, the beauty of its edifices, the masterpieces of all kinds which it possessed, intoxicated Henri's senses. Never having left the Castle von Framberg, except to visit in the neighborhood, he had not imagined that there existed in the whole world a place so delightful.

One evening while walking on the outskirts of the city, Henri heard the sounds of melodious music coming from a fine house situated on the water's edge.

"O my darling! It is she, she is there," said Henri to Franck. "It is the same music which I heard near Offenburg."

"Do you think so, monsieur?"

"Who beside my Pauline could draw from the lute such enchanting sounds?"

"O monsieur, a great many women play that instrument."

"No matter, I must absolutely know the person who lives in that house."

When Henri had formed any plan, he could not rest until he had put it into execution. Thus he began by singing under the windows of the house, in order to attract attention. Our hero was not a musician, but he had a fine voice, and the desire to please sufficed him in default of skill. Very soon the music ceased; the player was evidently listening to the new singer.

"You see very well that it must be she," said Henri; "she recognizes my voice, and she has ceased playing in order to listen to me."

"You can't be sure of that, monsieur; you don't know but what that's the manner of making love in Italy, and perhaps there is nothing unusual in her listening to you."

Despite Franck's opinion, Henri continued to sing, and the unseen person to listen. When he had finished, the Venetian blind opened, and some one threw into the air a note attached to a pebble.

"It is a letter," cried Henri, picking up the paper, "didn't I tell you it was she?"

"You can't be sure of that, monsieur," answered Franck, shaking his head.

Henri approached the window, and by means of some rays of light which escaped from it he read the following, —

Amiable stranger, the sound of your sweet and tender voice has penetrated right to my heart. I cannot resist the desire to know you, and I yield to the charm of your accents. Be at the little garden gate which is on the water side, at midnight this evening, and some one will lead you to me.

Henri knew not what to think after reading this note.

"Didn't I tell you, monsieur, that you were letting yourself in for a love affair?" remarked Franck.

"You are a fool," answered Henri, "this lady no doubt knows me, and she has something to say to me."

"Oh, you understand now that the one who writes is not your sweet young lady."

"But it's true that — However, I shall see the one who has written to me, and I intend to know what all this means."

"What, monsieur! You will go to this rendezvous?"

"And pray why should I not go?"

"But, monsieur, perhaps someone is laying a snare for you; believe me, my dear master, you had better not go."

"Come, say no more."

Franck was silent, seeing that it would be vain to endeavor to turn Henri from his project, and

the latter went to prepare for his midnight rendezvous.

At the appointed hour he was alone at the little garden gate; he had waited for some moments when it opened, and a woman took him by the hand and begged him to allow her to lead him. As he followed his conductress, his heart beat loudly, the effect ordinarily produced by a first love adventure; but this unknown uneasiness is of very short duration, for when pleasure becomes habitual one's enjoyment of it is diminished. Henri's conductress, after leading him through several of the garden paths, took him into the house; they went up a little private staircase, she opened a door, bade Henri enter, and retired.

Our hero remained for some moments motionless with astonishment and admiration. What he saw was indeed well calculated to surprise him. He was in a charming boudoir decorated with all that luxury and good taste could imagine to render it delightful, and it was lighted by an infinite number of lustres, the dazzling light of which added enchantment to this delightful spot; but what seductive object attracted Henri's looks? It was a young and beautiful woman, possessing all the gifts of fortune and of nature, who was carelessly lying on a sofa, and who welcomed the young man with a charming smile.

"Well, monsieur, have you nothing to say to me?"

"In truth, madame — I confess that I dare not say anything."

"Come, I see that you are a novice, and that it is necessary to encourage you."

"Madame, it's true that surprise, admiration —"

"Well, you are very complimentary, monsieur, but come and seat yourself beside me, instead of standing and staring at me."

Henri did not need to be asked twice, and was soon seated on the sofa beside the charming Italian.

"Was it you who were singing, monsieur?"

"Yes, madame, and I presume it was you whom I heard, was it not?"

"Yes, and I am flattered that my accents should have inspired you with a desire to know me."

"Madame, when one sees you, one feels that the charm which inspires him is redoubled."

"Really you say that as though you wished me to believe it," and the pretty woman gave Henri her hand, which he kissed with transport. "You will spend the evening with me, will you not, my friend," said Felicia, for that was the name of the pretty woman.

"But my dear lady, I have not warned my servant, and —"

"Why, monsieur, can it be necessary that we should separate so soon and that I should allow you to return to Florence without rest or refresh-

ment on account of your servant? Oh, no, you will stay, will you not?"

So saying Felicia smiled at Henri with her pretty lips, and the latter had not the courage to refuse her. She rang a bell; the woman who had introduced Henri appeared.

"Lesbie, will you bring us some supper?" Then Felicia approached her servant, and said a few words which Henri did not hear. Mademoiselle Lesbie, who appeared to understand what was desired, quickly obeyed her mistress's orders, and a choice collation was served to our two people.

The reader, no doubt, understands very well that Henri's conquest was one of those gay women with whom Italy abounds. Felicia, after a long career on the stage, had retired to the pretty house which she occupied near Florence. Her numerous friends had heaped presents upon her, and she, wiser than most of her kind, had amassed a handsome fortune, and was living almost as an honest woman when chance brought about the meeting with Henri. His looks and his unusual bearing attracted her, and she resolved to attach the handsome stranger to her chariot wheels. For a long time she had followed Henri all about, at the balls, on the promenades, she was always behind him without his being aware of it; and that which at first had been only a simple taste soon became a strong passion.

But Felicia saw well that Henri, a novice in love and romantic in character, could not be attracted by ordinary means. That was why she tried to draw his attention by means of her lute, which she played very well. We have seen how successful she had been in inflaming the imagination of our young traveller, and we shall see what she did later in the adventure.

The next morning Henri reflected on his situation; he vowed that he would know better this Felicia who had captivated his senses, and reproached himself for having allowed her to lead him too easily. But what other in his place, unless, indeed, a Cato, would have been wiser than he? These reasonable reflections were soon effaced by the sweet impressions of intimacy, and Henri was neither of an age to be virtuous, nor had he the character to wish to be so.

After breakfasting with Felicia, Henri returned to Florence, but while walking there he was no longer the same. That which the evening before had hardly attracted his regard, or fixed his attention, now appeared to him most delightful; he thought and breathed nothing but pleasure. He found Franck very little disquieted on his account, for having almost divined his master's adventure, he had not troubled himself about his absence.

Henri was not long in returning to Felicia, whom he found making her toilet.

"Where are you going, my dearest?"

"My dear, the weather is superb; we will go and dine in the country, and as they are giving a very charming play this evening, on our return to Florence, we will go and see it."

Felicia was soon ready, and behold our young people in the mood for rambling in the fields and woods and committing a thousand follies. Felicia had not wished that Lesbie should accompany her, and Henri had ordered Franck to remain in Florence, because one has no need of servants when one goes to walk with the one whom he loves. The country is delightful when one is happy, each group of trees, each delightful view, affords the utmost pleasure; the silence of the woods, the majesty of the forests, expand through all our being an emotion which elevates the soul and makes the heart beat softly. If, on the contrary, some deep grief troubles us, the charm of the country does not lessen our sorrow, the silence of nature adds to our melancholy, the eye only sees with indifference the beauties which are offered to our notice, and the obscurity of the forest wakens in our mind a thousand sinister thoughts, a thousand projects of destruction.

Henri and Felicia paused to admire all the views which pleased them. They had walked for a long time, and although they had rested occasionally they were at last really tired.

"Truly, monsieur, I can hardly walk, I can

never get as far as the place where we are to have dinner."

"But, madame, is that my fault? Have I refused to sit down whenever it pleased you?"

"Oh, no, my friend. I shall not be able to go out again for a week. Come, monsieur, we must go on."

"You're right; let us go and get some dinner."

"Oh, willingly, for I am hungry."

"And I also."

Our young people began to look for a cottage where they could find some dinner.

"My dear, we must have lost ourselves, for there is not a house in sight."

"I am afraid so, too, my dearest."

"Heavens! If night should surprise us in this solitary place."

"That would be very unfortunate!"

"Yes, for I am very timid."

"But, my dearest, I shall defend you if anyone attacks us."

"That's a great consolation."

At last, after walking for a long time, they reached a road and saw an isolated house. It was time, for night had begun to fall. They went up to the house and saw with joy that it was really an inn, very small and humble in appearance, it is true, but it was for them like the manna sent to the people of Israel. The innkeeper, who did not

appear accustomed to seeing people, received them with the greatest politeness, offering in advance all they desired, and assuring them that they would be satisfied with the supper.

"But what will you give us?" said Henri to the innkeeper.

"Monsieur, you shall have some macaroni."

"I don't want any," said Felicia, "one eats nothing else in this horrible country."

"Well, madame, I will give you some cheese and some cakes, and you shall tell me how you like them."

"What," cried Henri, "cheese and cakes to satisfy one's appetite when one has eaten nothing since morning!"

"And when one has so well earned an appetite," said Felicia.

"What can I do, monsieur, I offer you the best I have."

"What! Have you nothing else in the house?"

"Forgive me, monsieur, I have a little fowl which I have been keeping for a fortnight for some such occasion."

"The devil, it should be tender."

"Delicious, monsieur, delicious."

"In that case serve it to us quickly."

"Monsieur, there is a little difficulty there."

"What is it?"

"Why it has been already ordered by two officers who arrived here before you, and who are

playing cards upstairs while awaiting their supper."

"The devil! That's a nuisance," said Henri.

"But, my dear," said Felicia, "these gentlemen will no doubt be gallant enough to yield their supper to a lady, for it is impossible that they should be as hungry as we are."

"Ah, madame," said the innkeeper, "you know young men no longer pride themselves on their gallantry."

"No matter, Monsieur Innkeeper," resumed Henri, "do us the favor of speaking to these gentlemen and try to induce them to accede to our request."

"I'll go, monsieur, and do my best."

During his absence Henri laid a table for their supper. He was no less impatient than Felicia to know the result of their host's mission, and was beginning to doubt of his success when the sound of several persons coming down the stairs warned them that the gentlemen were about to answer their request in person.

"Let us see this lady," said one of them.

"Is she pretty," said the other.

Henri glanced smilingly at Felicia and perceived with astonishment that she had changed color. The two soldiers entered the room laughing. They were two handsome young men, who looked like scapegraces.

"Forgive me, madame," said one of them,

approaching Felicia, "if we take the liberty of offering it ourselves. But whom do I see?—It is Felicia," addressing his comrade.

"Yes, my faith, so it is," answered the other.

Henri reddened with anger. Felicia sought in vain to screen her features from the scrutiny of these gentlemen, and did not know how to put a good face upon it. One of the soldiers came forward and, cavalierly folding Felicia in his arms, "What, darling, do I see you again," he said, and was about to kiss her, but Felicia forcibly pushed him away.

"What," cried he, "will you be so cruel. Why, when you played 'The Queens,' in the great theatre at Naples you were not so haughty as that."

"What do you intend to insinuate by that, monsieur," said Henri, furiously approaching the soldier.

"Hang it, monsieur, you know very well what I mean."

"Is this a new lover, then, Felicia," resumed the other soldier, mockingly, "I compliment you upon him; he is still young, and you will be able to form him."

"Insolent fellow!" said Henri, looking at the other with eyes sparkling with anger, "I will teach you that I have no need of lessons to learn how to chastise men of your kind."

So saying Henri struck the soldier who was

nearest him. The latter, furious, drew his sabre and came at Henri as quick as lightning. The latter warded the stroke with a round table, which he used as a shield. The other officer quickly loosed Felicia, that he might join his comrade, and the young woman escaped from the room. The two soldiers were like lions around Henri, but the latter did marvels and, while warding off their blows with the table with Achillean ardor, he sent everything at them which he could find to his hand, pots, bottles, chairs, pitchers, all flew from one side to the other in the inn. The innkeeper tried to make peace and to separate the combatants and in mingling among them he received a stroke of the sabre meant for Henri, and rolled under the benches and tables shouting that he was dead. Our hero had the good fortune to hit one of the officers in the head with a bottle which he threw at him, and the blow stunned him so completely that he fell unconscious by the side of the innkeeper. His comrade, infuriated by this, set with fresh vigor on Henri, who was beginning to lose his strength, and perhaps would have been obliged to succumb to his adversary had not a crowd of peasants, who had been sought by the innkeeper's wife, come in to put an end to the fight. Henri profited by the tumult and reached the door. Two horses were tied in the courtyard, he took one of them, mounted, and arrived in Florence at a mad gallop.

"What, monsieur, is that you? I didn't think that you were going to sleep here this evening."

"No, Franck, we shall not sleep here again."

"What do you say, monsieur?"

"Go quickly, pay our host, and saddle our horses. We leave immediately."

"What, monsieur, in the middle of the night?"

"Come, no reflections, do as I tell you."

Franck hastened to obey, for he saw that his master was not in a humor to listen to his representations. The horses being ready, Henri and Franck mounted them, and left Florence in the middle of the night.

CHAPTER VIII

Rome

"It must be confessed, monsieur, that destiny is a queer thing and that her freaks are not to be accounted for. How often is one foiled in his dearest plans at the moment when they are apparently about to become successful. Then again a chance happiness, good fortune of one kind or another, comes to one when one has lost all hope; and when one thinks one is going to a ball, crack, one breaks an arm or a leg, and there he is in bed for six months; in truth, monsieur, if human beings were only reasonable, they would form no plans whatever for the future and tranquilly await what destiny happens to throw in their way."

It was M. Franck who, while trotting beside his master, was amusing himself by giving vent to his reflections. Although but a simple servant, Franck had observed, reflected, and in speaking so to Henri, he reasoned from events that had come to his own knowledge. The reasonings of the greatest philosophers are often reducible to destiny.

"And to what are we indebted for all this rhodomontade," said Henri to Franck, arousing himself from his reflections.

"To the fact, monsieur, that we are on the way to Rome at a moment when I least thought of being here, and you also, perhaps."

"He's right," said Henri to himself, but he would not relate to Franck an adventure which had wounded his self-respect and which he wished to forget as soon as possible.

"Don't you feel that it is raining, monsieur?" said Franck to Henri, after an hour's silence.

"That's true, but what can we do about it."

"My faith, monsieur, I don't see what should prevent our putting ourselves under shelter rather than allowing ourselves to get wet to the bone; for I believe that this is the commencement of a storm."

"You're right; well, then, let's look for a place where we can stay until the storm has passed."

"That's all very well to say, monsieur, but I don't see any such place."

"Let's go on a little farther."

After looking for some time, Henri perceived an old building which was apparently falling into ruin, and which appeared to be utterly abandoned.

"Wait, Franck, you see those old walls, we can find a shelter there."

"I doubt it, monsieur, for that building looks to be in a very bad state and has perhaps, for a long time, served only as a retreat for robbers."

"Are you afraid of going there?"

"Oh, indeed, no, monsieur; for if it is my des-

tiny to be murdered, do the best I can, I shall not be able to avoid it."

"Come, I see your philosophy is good for something. Let us urge our horses and hasten to get there, for the storm is increasing."

Henri and Franck arrived at last at the old ruined building, which seemed to be an ancient convent. They crossed a court filled with rubbish and entered a vast gallery to which time had been a little more lenient.

"Do you know, Franck, there is something romantic about this neighborhood, and I should not be surprised if some extraordinary adventure were to happen to us here."

"Nor I either, monsieur; besides, they say they are very common in this country."

He had hardly spoken when a slight sound came from the end of the gallery.

"Did you hear that, Franck?"

"It's some one who is listening to us."

"Come on," said Henri, "I am curious to know who it is."

Franck and his master immediately walked in the direction of the sound, but in the measure in which they advanced it seemed to them that some one receded before them. At the end of the gallery they found a staircase up which they groped; the person who was trying to escape them, in his haste made a false step, and rolled down the steps. Henri held him and seized him by the collar.

"Oh, mercy! do not kill me, Monsieur Robber," said he, throwing himself at Henri's feet.

"Who are you?" asked the latter.

"A poor domestic who has not a sou."

"Are you alone here?"

"No, Monsieur Robber, I am with my mistress, who sent me to investigate the place."

"Lead me to her."

"Yes, Monsieur Robber, willingly."

Henri still held the unknown, of whose truth he was suspicious.

The latter led them to a room behind the gallery, opened the door, and exclaimed, "Here's the chief of the band!"

Henri was very much surprised at finding himself in a room where some one had made a good fire and lighted several torches, and on perceiving a lady of thirty years, with another woman much younger, and four men in livery grouped behind her. At the shout which Henri's conductor uttered, the lady started with fright, and the four men jumped for their carbines.

"Don't be so much frightened, gentlemen," said Henri, laughing; "I am not a robber, but a traveller, and this is my servant. I was very desirous to see where this man would lead me, and to know with whom I had to deal."

Henri then approached the lady and excused himself for the fright which he had caused her, and confessed that he had not expected to find

himself in such good society in a neighborhood which appeared abandoned. The lady told him that she was the Marchesa di Belloni, that she had been visiting one of her estates near Florence, and was returning to Rome when the storm had surprised her near the old building, and she had preferred to enter it rather than to expose the health of her servants.

"I sent this man on a tour of discovery," said she, pointing out to Henri the man who had served as guide, "and knowing his cowardice, I expected some stupidity on his part, but I am delighted that he has been the cause of our meeting."

Henri responded to this compliment in the most gallant manner, and also told the marchesa his name and the object of his journey. When she learned Henri's name and title she appeared still more pleased with the adventure and they were soon in animated conversation. Franck, for his part, sought to make conversation with the young person who seemed to be the marchesa's lady's maid, but Mademoiselle Julia, for that was her name, scarcely listened to Franck and incessantly ogled Henri.

The marchesa and Henri forgot while talking that the night was passing, but the servants, who were probably not so well entertained as their mistress, noticed that the day was beginning to break.

The marchesa inquired as to the weather, they

told her that the storm was past, but that it still rained heavily; she then begged Henri to accept a seat in her carriage, and Henri, who had noticed Julia's glances, and who greatly admired the marchesa, eagerly accepted, and they went down into the court to make ready to resume their journey.

"Well," said Franck to himself, while following his master, "I see that this adventure, which appeared so romantic at first, will simply finish like any other."

Henri was in the carriage with the two women. The marchesa desired him to sit with her and Mademoiselle Julia seated herself opposite Henri, pouting a little with very charming effect. She was a very pretty little woman, was this Julia; she had delightfully expressive eyes, and she bent them constantly on Henri when she saw that her mistress was not looking. As to the marchesa, she was a perfectly beautiful woman; in addition to her elegant figure and noble bearing, her face was regularly beautiful; her hair was of a glossy black, and her flashing, vivacious eyes indicated an ardent and impetuous disposition.

The travellers arrived at Rome without other accident, and the marchesa on leaving Henri invited him to come often to see her.

Henri promised, after glancing at Julia, who seemed to desire, no less than her mistress, that he should accept the invitation.

"At least," said Henri to himself, while trav-

ersing the streets of Rome in search of a lodging, "this woman is really a marchesa and doesn't act the princesses at any theatre."

After putting up at the best inn of the city, Henri called on several merchants, that he might be dressed very richly and according to the latest mode.

"Monsieur," said Franck to his master, "are you aware that the marchesa will ruin you if this continues?"

"Idiot! Do you think that my father will refuse me any money that I need?"

"Mercy, monsieur, he won't allow you to continue on your travels, but will order you to return home."

"Well, then it will be time to settle ourselves."

On the evening of his arrival, Henri went to the house of the Marchesa di Belloni. She lived in the most beautiful part of the city; her hotel was most magnificent, and everything about it was luxurious and splendid.

A brilliant and numerous company were gathered there. The marchesa received Henri in the most gracious manner, and presented him to some very distinguished people with so much impressment that they overwhelmed him with the most polite attentions.

Our hero had never yet found himself in such brilliant society; surrounded by charming women, who seemed to vie with each other to please him,

and flattered by the attentions of the marchesa, he was supremely conscious of the honor done him.

However, as in the midst of so many people he could not often chat with the marchesa, he sat down to pass the time at a card table.

Soon the sight of the gold which shone before him heated his imagination. Wishing to imitate the persons with whom he was playing he lost in one moment all that he had on him.

He rose from the table and was walking quietly about the room examining the different personages which filled it, when he half thought that he saw at the entrance door someone who was making a sign to him. The idea of Julia, whom he had not yet seen, immediately flashed into his mind, and wishing to assure himself as to the truth he approached the marchesa to make his adieus. She told him that she expected him the next morning to breakfast; Henri promised and slowly left the room. Hardly had he crossed the doorsill when a woman took him by the hand and told him to follow her. Henri saw that it was not Julia, but allowed her to conduct him. She took him through a long series of unlighted rooms, then she paused in one which was smaller than the others, told him to wait for a moment, and left him alone in the darkness.

"What does this mean?" thought Henri, "this adventure is taking a very spicy turn, but I must not forget that I am in Italy and that this is a

country of miracles." Thus thinking he seated himself on a sofa to await the end of his adventure.

"What! You've gone to sleep" said someone to Henri, in a low, soft voice, pushing him gently.

"Is it you, charming Julia?" answered Henri awakening. "It seems to me that you've allowed me to sleep for a long time."

Julia confessed that he had been there for nearly an hour, and that she had been very much afraid that he would have left.

"Why, where should I have gone, I don't know my way about this hotel, why did you leave me alone so long?"

"Because the marchesa called me, and I could not leave her sooner. But leave me alone, monsieur, I beg of you, I have something very important to say to you."

"You shall tell it to me another time."

"No, monsieur, have done kissing me, — if the marchesa should come."

Despite Julia's efforts Henri profited by the darkness to renew his audacious conduct, and succeeded in obtaining the kisses which she had never had the intention of refusing him.

"Now you will listen to me, I hope, monsieur."

"Oh, yes, my dear Julia, I am all ears."

"You must know, monsieur, that — good heavens! I believe the marchesa is coming."

"I really do hear some noise."

"O heavens! and she must pass through here to go into her bedroom."

"Why, should she see me what harm will it do?"

"O monsieur, I shall be lost beyond all hope."

"I shall say that I lost myself in the hotel, and want to get out of it."

"Oh, you don't know the marchesa's suspicious character. She doubts everything. She loves you I am certain, and we shall both be lost."

"What shall we do then?"

"She is coming; I can hear her voice; we must hide."

"But where?"

"Wait, in this closet; there is room enough there for you."

"But I shall stifle in there."

"No you won't, and I shall come and let you out as soon as madame has gone to bed."

It was time that Henri should hide himself, for the marchesa soon came into the room holding a candle in her hand.

"Oh, are you there, Julia? Where have you been? For two hours I have been looking everywhere for you."

"But, madame, I was in your room to see that nothing was lacking for you."

"Why are you here without a light?"

"Madame, it's because mine has gone out."

"Come, that's enough; come and undress me."

"Madame is going to bed already?"

"What do you mean by already; it is nearly three o'clock in the morning."

"Ah, you are right, madame."

Julia followed the marchesa, cursing the fate which separated her from the one who so greatly needed her assistance. In fact, Henri was not at all at his ease in a closet where he could not change his position; and where the insufficiency of air accentuated his martyrdom. Vainly he endeavored to half open the door of his cage. Julia, to make things secure, had carried away the key, and the closet only opened from the outside.

"Ah," said Henri to himself, "my tutor Mullern was right in telling me that women would make me act very foolishly."

At length, after an anxious half hour, Henri resolved to leave a position which had become insupportable. Indeed, he would have waited in vain for Julia to come to his succor. The marchesa, who appeared to suspect something, sent Julia into a closet which opened into her bedroom, and shut the door on her, so that the poor child was obliged to abandon her lover to the mercy of another woman; but she hoped that Henri, fatigued by his evening, would sleep quietly where she had left him.

"My faith! If it pleases heaven," said Henri "I must get out of here." He began by shaking

the door of the closet, and perceived with joy that by lifting it a little he could get it off the hinges; he profited by his discovery, and was soon outside. But that was not all; he must leave the hotel, which was a matter of great difficulty. Henri found on leaving his hiding place that he was in the same darkness as before, and how should he find his way back? How could he avoid making a mistake?

"Come, I'll walk straight on," said Henri; "that'll lead somewhere, at any rate."

After groping about a little, he found an open door, and went into another room.

"Let's look about a bit, and see if there's not a staircase," said Henri to himself. But while groping along the wall he found a bed instead of a staircase before him.

"The devil!" said he; "perhaps it's the marchesa's bed."

A low sigh which came to his ear warned him that it was occupied, and not caring to disturb anyone he was hurriedly leaving, when, in passing near a stand, his coat caught on a porcelain tea-service, which fell to the floor and broke.

"Who's there?" said a faltering voice, which Henri recognized as that of the marchesa.

"What shall I do? Faith," thought Henri, "it's much better to pass for a lover than for a thief; besides it's the only way left for me. I must come out of it as best I can."

Having made up his mind Henri approached the marchesa's bed, and said to her, —

"Excuse my temerity, madame; it is only such love as mine which could excuse my attempt."

"What monsieur, is it you? At this hour, in my room?"

"Yes, madame. I came here to win over your servant, Julia; touched by my passion for her mistress, it was she who hid me in your room."

"Can it be! Ah, I am not so astonished at her embarrassment now; but it is horrible; it is abominable to have the audacity to —"

"What, are you insensible to a love so tender; well, then, I will go, madame; I will leave you forever."

"Stop! Where are you going now? Should anyone see you leave my room I am lost."

"Well, madame, what are your orders?"

"Remain here, it must be so, for it is the only way to save my reputation."

The next morning at daybreak, after bidding the marchesa good-by most tenderly, Henri softly opened the door and descended the stairs; he had taken but a few steps when he found himself face to face with Julia.

"What, is that you, monsieur?"

"Yes, Julia, it is I myself."

"And how did you manage to get out of the closet?"

"I managed the best way I could, but, in truth,

my dear Julia, I am too hurried now to be able to tell you about it."

"If you will come up to my room, now that madame the marchesa is asleep—"

"No, sweetheart, it is time that I should go back to my inn; this evening I will tell you all that you wish to know."

So saying Henri went down the stairs and hastily left the marchesa's hotel.

"Really I don't understand it," said Julia to herself, and she awaited impatiently the moment when she should go to her mistress.

Towards noon the marchesa rang; Julia went down in all haste, not knowing whether to fear or to hope; but she was agreeably surprised to find the marchesa in a charming humor, who called her nothing but her dear, her good Julia. Not knowing what to augur by so flattering a welcome, Julia ended in believing that her mistress knew nothing, while the marchesa showered caresses and favors upon her maid, believing that Julia had divined matters which it was impossible for her to even mention.

On returning to his lodgings, Henri wrote to the colonel to ask for some money, and sent Franck to post the letter. Franck, who saw the address, looked at his master, smiling, with an air which seemed to say, "My predictions are accomplished." But Henri threw himself on his bed. without deigning to answer his glance, and Franck

said to himself, — "If it is his destiny to lose his money, there is no way of preventing it."

Several months passed in the same manner, Henri sharing his time between the marchesa, Julia and play. The colonel had sent the money which he had asked for and Henri, having the means, continued the same mode of life; besides luck, which had at first been unfavorable to him, turned, and he ardently gratified a passion which made him at times neglect the marchesa and Julia.

Things were at this pass when a young Neapolitan countess appeared in the marchesa's society. Henri immediately felt that love for her which he had already experienced for the marchesa. For her part the young countess could not see Henri with indifference; but the marchesa, who was excessively jealous, read his new passion in Henri's eyes and resolved to revenge herself for his infidelity.

The occasion was not long in offering. Henri received a note in which some one invited him to wait before the countess' house, and informed him that they would gain him access to the one he loved. Not doubting but that this note came from the countess herself, Henri, at the height of his happiness, sent word to the marchesa that he was indisposed and could not wait on her.

The hour for the rendezvous drew near; Henri was preparing to start when someone knocked several times at the door.

"Can it be the marchesa?" said Henri to Franck, "we mustn't open —" but the words, "Open, open, without fear," pronounced in a faltering voice, made Henri desire to see who it could be.

He opened the door and Julia came into the room.

"You are astonished at my visit, monsieur," said Julia to Henri, "but when you know my motive I hope that you will give me credit for what I have done."

"What do you wish to say, Julia?"

"I wish to say, monsieur, that the marchesa is aware of your love for the young Neapolitan countess who came a short time ago to her house."

"What, Julia, you can think —"

"Ah, monsieur, you cannot deceive one who knows how to read your heart, but I love you too much to revenge myself, even though I could do so at the present moment; instead, I wish to save you from the snare into which you are about to fall."

"What do you mean, Julia?"

"You received a note this morning."

"That's true."

"Someone appointed a meeting with you this evening at midnight, in front of the countess's house."

"But how have you learned all that?"

"Well, why shouldn't I learn it, since the marchesa wrote that note to you herself."

"Herself!"

"To see if you will betray her by going to the rendezvous. She is an Italian, I have told you enough."

"What! You think she would be capable of—"

"Jealousy has made her furious against you. Believe me, you had better not go to this rendezvous."

"Be easy, my dear Julia; if I go there I shall take my precautions."

"Well, at least I have warned you; now I shall leave you; your fate is in your own hands."

"Goodby, my dear Julia; believe me I shall not forget while I live what you have done for me." Saying these words, Henri tenderly pressed Julia's hand against his heart, and she hurriedly left.

"She's a good girl, is this Julia," said Franck to his master, when she had left; "I didn't hear what she said to you, but I am sure it was for your good."

"Franck!"

"Monsieur."

"Go and prepare two horses, and pack our valises."

"What, monsieur! Are we going to leave here?"

"Do what I tell you, wait for me here, and I will return in a few moments."

"Very well, monsieur."

Henri wrapped himself in his cloak, and hastened to the appointed place. He had a great curiosity to see for himself what means the marchesa would take to procure her revenge, but he was careful to take under his cloak a sword and a pair of pistols. Midnight commenced to strike as Henri reached the countess's house.

"I am perhaps come too late," said he to himself, "and the projected vengeance will not take place."

While waiting, he walked up and down in front of the house, situated on the corner of a little gloomy street, which on account of its isolated situation was eminently fitted to serve the marchesa's design. He had waited for some minutes when a man wrapped in a cloak and holding a dark lantern left the street and came towards him.

"You are prompt," said the man, addressing him; "that is well, follow me, and I will lead you to the countess's house."

"And why should we not go in at this door?" asked Henri of the unknown.

"Because you would be seen by everybody, and as there is a secret entrance which opens into the street before us, madame, the countess, has told me to introduce you by that."

"In that case, go on, and I will follow you."

Henri appeared to be following his guide with-

out suspicion, but he softly drew his pistols from beneath his coat, and held them ready for any event. Hardly had they turned the corner of the street when two other men came from an ambuscade, trusting to fall upon Henri unobserved; but our hero received them pistol in fist, and taking aim at them, point blank, extended the two dead at his feet. The man with the lantern, on seeing his comrades fall, immediately took flight; Henri ran after him, but the murderer knew the turns of the town better than he, and was soon lost to sight. Reflecting that should he pursue this man he might meet others, Henri thought that it would be more prudent to go back to his inn; and after many detours he found himself there.

"Oh! it seems to me you've had a warm evening," said Franck, as Henri placed his pistols on the table.

"Yes, my dear Franck, reload my pistols."

"Oh, are you going to begin again, monsieur?"

"No, we are going to leave."

"It seems to me you have had enough of it; where are we going, monsieur, to Naples?"

"No, I have had enough of Italy."

"Much better, faith; for I am tired of this country also."

"We shall go to Paris; perhaps I shall be more fortunate than I have been up to the present, and shall there find her for whom I would give my life."

"What, monsieur, are you thinking of her still?"

"Am I thinking of her still? Ah! Franck, do you believe that these passions of a moment which have occupied my mind since I started on my travels can ever efface the remembrance of my dear Pauline? No, these seductive women have filled my head, troubled my senses, but neither of them have had my heart."

"In that case, monsieur, I see well that it must be love which you feel for your unknown —"

"Yes, the tenderest, the sincerest love."

"But the horses are ready, monsieur," said Franck.

"What do you say to starting then?"

"It is singular," said Franck, on leaving Rome with his master, "that we always start on our travels in the middle of the night; it must be our destiny to do so."

CHAPTER IX

Paris. An Adventure of Another Kind

Henri and Franck arrived at Paris after stopping for some time at both Turin and Lyons, where, however, nothing of a remarkable nature happened to them.

"My faith, monsieur," said Franck to his master on entering the capital of gayety and pleasure, "the very first sight of this good city of Paris pleases me more than any of those we have visited. See all these people coming and going, it's a perpetual movement; at each step one finds something curious or interesting. If one wished to be melancholy here, he could not. As for the women, monsieur, they are charming, delightful; tell me, frankly, have we seen women anywhere else with the same carriage, the same grace, the same elegance? women who look at a man with a smile so flattering, so expressive? Monsieur, I am really enchanted."

"The devil, Franck, you are becoming eloquent."

"It is this living panorama, this interesting scenery which inspires me, monsieur," said Franck warmly.

"Leave your scenery and see about finding a hotel where I can live comfortably."

Henri lodged himself in the neighborhood of the Chaussée-d'Antin, and on the evening of their arrival he visited the plays and the most frequented cafés of the city; wearied and fatigued he went back to his hotel and found Franck awaiting him with an air a little less cheerful than that of the morning.

"What's the matter, Franck?" asked Henri, "are you tired already of Paris?"

"Oh, no, monsieur, it is not that."

"Why, then, do you look so gloomy this evening, for you were so cheerful in the morning?"

"Why, monsieur, it's because I've had a little adventure."

"An adventure, let's hear what it is, tell me all about it."

"Very willingly, monsieur, if it will give you pleasure. You must know, then, that after you left I went to the Palais Royal, because someone told me it was the most curious place in the city. I had been there for an hour admiring all that it holds, and delighting myself with each new object which met my eyes, when a very well-dressed man with an honest appearance approached me to ask me the way to some street or other. 'My faith, sir,' I said to him, 'I don't know any more than you do, for I arrived only today in the city and am an entire stranger."

"'You're a stranger,' he said to me, 'why, then, so am I; but wait, since chance has thrown us together, if you like we will pass the evening so.' I accepted, pleased to find someone with whom I could chat in a city where I knew nobody. We continued to walk about and chat when the devil, or rather fate, made the new comer speak of playing billiards. You know, sir, that is my favorite game, and that I can play it pretty well."

"Oh, you've already told me that, well, no doubt you played it."

"Yes, monsieur, that is to say, my man proposed a game and I accepted. We went into a café and entered a billiard room, but as it was occupied and the game was almost done we remained to look on. One of the two players was weaker than the other, and my stranger joked him on his playing. 'I bet two louis,' said he at once, 'that you won't hit that ball.' The ball was good enough, the person took the bet and won. My man seemed disappointed at having lost, and said he would take his revenge. The occasion was not long in presenting itself. The person who took the two louis was about to play, he had absolutely nothing to do but to slightly push a ball into the pocket which was already half there. Well, my man had the effrontery to say that he could not do it. I answered that he would do it. Can you believe, monsieur, that he had the assurance to bet me twenty louis that he would not. I accepted

immediately, I had, unfortunately, all my money about me."

"And you won?"

"On the contrary, monsieur, the awkward chap, who had already made a stroke a hundred times more difficult, hit the ball so hard that in place of putting it in the pocket, he put himself out. Then, with despair in my heart, I gave up all that I possessed, I had twenty louis less six francs, but the winner willingly forgave me the remainder, and I left the café cursing the destiny which had caused me to meet this fate."

Henri could not refrain from laughing at the adventure which had happened to poor Franck, however, he advised him to be more prudent another time, and, above all, to mistrust those pretended strangers who only pose as such in order that they may dupe the real ones.

Henri had been for some days in Paris when one evening at the play he found himself placed behind a lady who appeared to merit his attention; she was tall, well made, with an agreeable manner and an expressive face, and did not appear indifferent to the glances which her neighbor cast at her. Henri, delighted at his new conquest, would willingly have talked to her, but she had with her a fat man covered with diamonds and jewels, who looked like a retired dealer in beef; who appeared to be as much embarrassed by his two watches as by his enormous expanse of waistcoat,

and who occupied three-quarters of the box where Henri was. Seeing very well that he could not declare his sentiments while she had this man with her, Henri contented himself with leaving the play and ordering Franck to follow her with the carriage, while he tried to obtain some information about the lady. Henri impatiently awaited the return of his valet, and at last the latter arrived.

"Well, my dear Franck," said Henri, "have you good news to tell me?"

"Yes, monsieur, excellent."

"Have you found out where the lady in question lives?"

"Yes, monsieur, in the Boulevard des Italiens."

"Good! and did you learn anything else?"

"Yes, monsieur, the porter of the house is rather gossipy and made no difficulty about chatting with me."

"Bravo! Well, this lady —"

"She is an opera dancer, monsieur."

"An opera dancer," said Henri to himself, "the devil! There's much to win and to lose with that kind of woman."

"I learned further," continued Franck, "that the fat man who was with her was an old purveyor, who keeps her like a princess, because you know, monsieur, it's very good form to keep an opera dancer."

"Oh, is it good form, Franck?"

"Yes, monsieur, and yours has already had

among her lovers two Russian princes, four financiers, six Englishmen, ten ministers of finance, three bankers, and she now has her ninth contractor."

"You are joking, Franck."

"No, monsieur, it is because she is in vogue; she is the woman à la mode, the beauty of the day; these are the porter's precise words."

"Yes; ah, she is the woman à la mode. In that case, as I wish to follow the fashion, I shall make up to the dancer."

"You're right, monsieur, that is the best way to make people talk about you. I bet, however, that it won't last very long; at the pace she is going we shall soon find her on the list of reformed women."

"Don't be uneasy, Franck, if that woman loves me she'll not ruin me."

"O monsieur, to expect love from a dancer is to be too exacting."

The next morning Henri wrote a billet-doux to his beauty and sent it by Franck. The latter soon returned with an answer from the lady, who invited Henri to go and take coffee with her the next day.

"Well, now, Franck," said Henri, "you see I've touched her heart."

"It's possible, monsieur."

"But tell me, did she ask any questions?"

"Certainly, monsieur, she asked your name and

your titles, 'The Count von Framberg,' said she, when I had told her your name, and immediately she wrote the note I brought in answer to yours. She is a woman who does not receive the first comer."

"She would be one of the last to do so."

Henri, in order to pass the time until the next day, recommenced his tour of the city, and visited the public places. While passing near a gambling-house, the desire of increasing his money, that he might make a brilliant figure in Paris, urged him to go in. He hesitatingly placed a louis on the red, which he fully expected to lose; but he won. Fortune continued to smile on him, he saw that he had struck a vein of luck and played higher. Finally, at the end of an hour, he left with thirty thousand francs more than he had possessed on entering.

By this stroke he was enabled to be in the fashion and to eclipse all the exquisites of the day. He went back to his hotel and gave Franck orders to hire a well-appointed carriage and sent him at once to a jeweler, a horsedealer, and a dancing-master. Franck, astonished, ran from one place to another, without knowing what all this meant, but rendering thanks to the destiny which had made a millionaire of his master. However, thirty thousand francs does not go far in Paris; the jeweler and the horsedealer would have sold him goods worth double that amount. Henri realized

that he was not so rich as he had believed, but thought he had only to return to the roulette table in order to win more. While waiting he contented himself with buying a horse for his carriage and a diamond pin for himself; he then sent away his tradesmen, promising to see them again soon.

Henri awaited the next day impatiently, for being rich does not prevent one from suffering from ennui. After making a careful toilet he got into his cabriolet and went to the Boulevard des Italiens. It was near midday, and at that hour the streets of Paris are filled with people; above all, in a neighborhood so well frequented as that through which Henri was passing. Our young man, ardently desirous of reaching his lady's house, drove recklessly, and had already several times barely missed running over someone, it being only his adroitness that prevented these mishaps. In turning a corner of the street he had not perceived a wagon which was coming on his side. The wagoner, according to the custom of these gentlemen, did not go out of his way for a cabriolet; Henri came into violent contact with the wagon, and his light vehicle, unable to sustain the shock, upset, and in its fall knocked down an old woman who was leaving a shop where she had been to get some lights for her cat. Screams of "Help, I am killed!" and the cabriolet in the gutter, soon attracted an immense crowd of those loungers with which Paris abounds.

"It's a woman who has been crushed by a cabriolet driven by a young man," said one.

"These coxcombs don't care what they do to anybody else. The cabriolet is all broken."

"It's surprising," said another, "that this little woman should have had the strength to overturn a carriage."

While they talked thus, the wagoner had thought it prudent to go off with his wagon, for fear that some one should make him pay damages. Henri got out of the cabriolet, consigning wagoners and idlers to the devil. Franck who was behind the cabriolet had barely escaped with his life, but he came out of it with nothing worse than a black eye, and some bumps on his head. The old woman, who was more frightened than hurt, but who wished to profit by the adventure, filled the air with her shrieking and groaning. Henri thought he would return quietly home, and charged Franck to raise his cabriolet, when the crowd which surrounded them advised the old woman to hale him before a magistrate.

"Before the magistrate," said Henri; "what do you want me to do?"

"Oh, my fine sir, do you think that any one may run over poor people like this, and that nothing will be said about it?"

"You idiot; I am the victim in the matter; hasn't my cabriolet been broken?"

"And this poor woman whom you've crushed,

don't you think it necessary to give her something to indemnify her, if she's killed?"

"If she is killed what the devil do you think I can do about it?"

"All the same, she must have some consolation."

Our hero realized that he could not get out of it without parting with some money. He approached the old woman, put fifteen louis in her hand, and in this manner he escaped going before the magistrate.

"Just see how fortunate that old bawler is," said a gossip to her neighbor; "for a trifle of that sum, I'd be willing to have as much happen to me any day."

"There are some people who have good luck," answered the other.

"It's owing to her cat, that she got that."

"She won't be any richer," said a third; "she's an old gambler; she'll go and put all that money in the lottery."

Henri returned home, muddy, tired, and in despair because he had missed his rendezvous; however, he dressed himself again, took a carriage and ventured to present himself at his lady's house. He was agreeably surprised to find that she was still there; he did not know that it was good form to make a person wait two hours for one. The lady received him as one whom she had known for a long time and he saw that Franck

had not been mistaken in remarking the elegance and sumptuosity of the dancer's dwelling, for he had seen nothing in Italy comparable to the opera dancer's boudoir. Henri's adventure made the subject of conversation during breakfast. The lady laughed heartily, and told him it would be the news of the day. He was astonished to find such good manners, and so much mind in a woman of the theatre, as well as a reserve and a reluctance in replying to his amorous advances. Henri was ignorant of the fact that a woman who sells herself is not so easy a conquest as a woman who gives herself; one yields to the impulse of her heart, while the other defers her favors until she has obtained the price of them.

Henri and his flame were talking together when a servant came to inform the lady that some one desired to speak to her.

"I have already said that I was out to everybody!" exclaimed she, impatiently. They answered that it was some one who must absolutely see her. Then she begged Henri to go into her drawing-room for a moment, telling him that it was a milliner, and that she would send her away. He appeared quite willing to depart, but to go into the drawing-room he must pass through an antechamber with glass doors, which led into the lady's boudoir; he retraced his steps as soon as he was alone, that he might learn what passed in the boudoir.

In place of a milliner Henri saw a young officer come into the room and throw himself into an armchair, without noticing the mistress of the house.

"What, is that you Floricourt," said the latter, with a half-laughing, half-embarrassed air.

"Yes, it is I. And I am very much astonished that you should make me dance attendance in your antechamber."

"Could I suspect that it was you when I have not seen you for a week?"

"You thought, no doubt, that it was your fat Mondor, and that he would tranquilly leave as soon as they told him that you were not in. But I am not of the same constitution, and I scoff at your orders, and at your fat contractors."

"But, monsieur, what means this tone? It becomes you well, whom I have heaped with benefits, whom I have rehabilitated from head to foot, to make such foolish speeches to me. Why have I been good enough to deprive myself of everything for monsieur? In truth, women are very foolish to give way to such weaknesses, for the ones they oblige are always ungrateful."

"As to the question of your gifts, madame, you have made me one which does not please me at all."

"Monsieur, when one receives anything from a woman, he must take the ill with the good."

"In truth — well, then, I will teach you not to

play me these tricks, and I am going to make the one who is breakfasting with you, pay up."

"You are a fool, Floricourt; I am alone, I assure you."

"I am not taken in by these stories; since he is in hiding, perhaps he is afraid to meet me, and I will take from him all desire to return here." So saying, the young man looked all around him, and felt with his foot under all the tables. At last he perceived Henri, who remained motionless before the glass door which the officer opened suddenly, and gave Henri a slap in the face before our hero had time to defend himself. Henri was about to fall on his adversary when the dame came between them to separate them.

"Monsieur," said Henri to the officer, "if you are a man of honor, you will account to me for the insult which you have given me."

"Oh, monsieur, has not had enough," answered the other sneeringly, "very well, I will give you a stronger lesson."

"There is no need of conversation, monsieur, I do not desire it. Here is my address. I will wait for you tomorrow at my lodgings at four o'clock in the morning."

So saying, Henri left, without deigning to glance at the woman who was with them.

"This also is my own fault," said he to himself, when he reached his hotel; "but since I have been travelling I have done nothing but

foolish actions. O father! if you knew your son's conduct, how much disappointment it would cause you; and you, good Mullern, if I had paid more heed to your advice I should not be where I am; but since destiny is against me, since I cannot discover her who would have made my life happy, I swear that I will soon return to Framberg."

The officer came punctually to the place of meeting. Henri took his sword, and without saying a single word they went out to the Bois de Boulogne; there each took off his coat and impetuously began to fight.

Henri was weaker in the arms than his adversary, but he was cool and self-possessed, and knew how to adroitly parry every stroke.

Presently the officer, in trying to reach Henri, ran himself through with the latter's sword and fell dead at his feet. Henri ran back to his hotel; it seemed to him that the shade of his unfortunate victim followed on his steps. It is a frightful thing, in fact, to kill a fellow creature for a woman whom one must despise. Henri made a thousand reflections, and his soul was oppressed by the weight of the blood he had shed. Franck was alarmed at seeing his master in a state of depression which was so unusual to him.

"What is the matter, monsieur, has some misfortune come to you?"

"Oh, yes, Franck, a misfortune which I shall never forgive myself."

"What will you have, monsieur, we must take things as destiny sends them."

"Prepare everything for our departure; we shall leave Paris this morning."

"May I know where we are going, monsieur?"

"We are returning to Framberg. I am longing to see my father and that good Mullern who loves me so much."

"My faith, monsieur, I am delighted also. There is nothing so dear as one's father's house."

Henri and Franck advanced slowly over the road towards Germany, the former reflecting somewhat sadly on the results of his travels. What does one gain by travelling about the world? Merely the conviction that there is but little resemblance between real happiness and that of the imagination. Master Franck, although less gloomy than his master, found that a peaceable and tranquil life was worth more than the pleasure of going abroad, and he congratulated those whose destiny it was to stay peaceably in the land of their birth.

Some leagues from Strasburg, Henri stopped in the same forest where some months before Colonel Framberg and Mullern had found shelter.

Desiring to rest for a short time in its shade, he sent Franck on before, and ordered him to wait at the first inn in Strasburg. The tranquillity of the place invited the traveller to rest, and Henri, who had journeyed for several days with-

out stopping, felt the need of yielding to the fatigue which overcame him. He seated himself against a thick clump of bushes, shaded by a majestic oak, and sleep soon closed his eyes.

When he awoke, day was closing. He cautiously thrust his face forward and perceived two men a few steps from him. Their evil-looking faces warned him not to show himself; and as they believed themselves to be alone, he easily heard the following conversation, —

"You are quite sure it was he?"

"Yes, monsieur, I am positively certain, and though it's a devil of a long time since I've seen him, his face is too striking for me to forget it. Besides I obtained some information about him in the inn where he was stopping, and I am sure I was not mistaken."

"And he will pass through this forest?"

"Yes, monsieur, he can't take any other way, and I hastened to tell you that we may not let such a fine chance escape us."

"What do you think we'd better do, Stoffar?"

"Hang it, there's only one thing to do, and that is to rid ourselves of him so that he'll cause us no more uneasiness."

Henri felt his blood boil in his veins, and was ready to throw himself on the two scoundrels, but he reflected that perhaps that was not the best means of saving their intended victim, and he restrained his indignation.

"But," resumed the one who appeared to be the master, "if we content ourselves with seizing his person and keeping him shut up, we shall by that means be able to compel him to tell us what he has done."

"No, monsieur," interrupted the other, "that's of no use at all. Besides, where could you shut him up? In your house? At any moment some one might discover him there, and what would prevent him from escaping, and that would be a pretty business for us. Believe me, in circumstances like this we must not employ half-measures. Once he is dead, you may remain easy, for he is the only one you have to fear!"

"You're right, Stoffar, and I've made up my mind to it —"

The sound of horse's feet interrupted the conversation.

"It is he, monsieur," said one of the men, rising, "he's coming. Let's get ready to give him a warm reception!"

They placed themselves behind some trees. Henri, for his part, had his pistols, and, thanking heaven that he had been chosen as the defender of the unlucky traveller, held himself ready for any event. In a few moments he saw a man on horseback coming his side of the way. It was still light enough for him to distinguish the features of the traveller. It was a man of about forty, tall, and of gentle but melancholy expression, which

told of a heart oppressed by the weight of a deep sorrow.

Henri felt his heart beat violently as the stranger drew near him and forgot in looking on his face the danger which threatened his life; but he was soon roused from this state of mind by the noise which the two men made in running, sword in hand, at the traveller, who, stunned by this sudden attack, had not time to draw his weapons and would inevitably have been done to death had not Henri, quick as lightning, hurled himself on the murderers. The two men, affrighted by this sudden apparition, thought of nothing but flight. Henri took aim at them with his two pistols; one of the scoundrels fell dead, the other, untouched, escaped into the depths of the forest.

Henri thought that it would be imprudent to follow him, and turned towards the one he had saved. The traveller did not know how to sufficiently attest his gratitude to his liberator.

"You owe me no thanks, monsieur," said Henri, "in coming to your help I only fulfilled the duty of a gentleman, and I am sure that in my place you would have done as much. But, believe me, we had better hasten to a more frequented road, for it is growing dark and we may not be so fortunate a second time."

"I am of your opinion, monsieur," answered the stranger, "but you are on foot, it appears to me."

"Yes, I am, for I sent my servant on before with my horse, expecting to reach Strasburg this evening."

"Well, mount behind me; in that way we shall the sooner get out of the forest."

Henri accepted this offer and they set off at a gallop, and on the way entered into details regarding the event which had taken place.

"I didn't think that the forest through which I had to pass was infested with brigands."

"You are mistaken, monsieur, in taking for such the men who attacked you; I am certain they were not robbers."

Then Henri related all he had heard, and noticed that his companion was paying the greatest attention to his story.

"Can it be?" cried the traveller, when Henri had finished speaking. "But, monsieur, did you not hear something further than that?"

"Nothing further, monsieur; but I presume that is sufficient to make you understand who these people were."

"Indeed, you are mistaken, I assure you I know nothing of what you have told me, and know of no enemies capable of such a dastardly crime."

"Hang it, it's very strange!"

"I've never injured anybody, and have done all the good that I could."

"It is often in doing good that one attracts the hatred of the wicked."

"Ah, you are right, monsieur, and you open my eyes."

Here Henri's companion fell into a profound revery, and the latter dared not further question him.

Our two travellers soon reached a frequented road; and as the darkness increased, Henri thought it would be better to wait until the next day to go to Strasburg. They stopped before the first inn.

"You are going to Strasburg, I am coming from there; and since our ways are opposite, I will now say good-by to you."

"What! are you not going to stop here?" queried Henri.

"No, for it will make me late in reaching Paris, where I have important business to finish; but as I expect soon to return to Strasburg, I hope I shall have the pleasure of becoming more intimately acquainted with one who has saved my life."

Henri replied that he did not expect to make a long sojourn.

"But," added he, "as I have as great a desire as yourself that we should meet again, I invite you, if chance should lead you to the place where I live, not to forget that you have in Henri von Framberg a friend who esteems himself happy because he has been able to serve you."

"Henri von Framberg?" exclaimed his com-

panion. "What! You are the son of Colonel Framberg?"

"Certainly," said Henri, "why this astonishment? Do you know my father?"

"I have heard him spoken of, reports of his bravery and his deeds have reached my ears,"

"Why, then, that is one reason the more that you should come to the castle, where, I assure you, you will receive a cordial welcome."

The stranger thanked Henri; the name of Framberg had disturbed him inordinately, which our hero perceived, but he dared not ask him the cause of his agitation and they separated, reiterating assurances of the most sincere friendship.

Henri went into the inn and asked for a private room; there he pondered on his extraordinary adventure and on the new acquaintance he had made. Despite the difference between his age and that of the stranger, Henri felt that he could love him as a brother, and he regretted having forgotten to ask his name. He went to sleep making these reflections, and the next day very early he took a post-chaise and started for Strasburg.

CHAPTER X

He Finds Her

Henri found Franck awaiting him at the inn where he had appointed a meeting. The latter was extremely uneasy at his master's non-arrival on the evening before and Henri gave him a detailed account of all that had happened to him in the interval that had elapsed since they had parted.

"You will confess, monsieur," said Franck, "that you hardly expected to be the hero of such an adventure. I am sure the gentleman whose life you saved must have been very grateful to you; but all the same, if it is his destiny to be murdered, he will not so escape another time."

Henri left Franck and his destiny and went out, that he might look about him, and acquaint himself with the town. Strangely enough, since his adventure of the evening before, the clouds which for some days past had obscured his mind had lifted, his gloomy thoughts were entirely obliterated, he felt as youth should ever feel, cheerful, gay and lighthearted, and there only remained to him the remembrance of his travels,

and of his follies, and the firm resolution that he would conduct himself better in the future.

While making virtuous plans, Henri perceived that he had left the town; he was about to retrace his steps when he heard cries for help. He turned and perceived a young woman struggling with a soldier, who was offering her some rudeness. He ran towards the soldier, who, being a coward, left his prey on seeing a man approach; Henri then offered his services to the young lady, but how can one depict his surprise, his delight, when he recognized in her his dear Pauline.

"What, is it indeed you, mademoiselle?"

"And you, monsieur?"

They were both so much moved that this was all they could say.

Henri contemplated the charms of his sweet friend, and found her even more beautiful than when he had last seen her. As for Pauline, she shared Henri's emotion and pleasure.

"O monsieur," said she, at length, "how I thank heaven for sending you in time to deliver me from the danger I was in."

"Monsieur," answered Henri, sighing, "I am no longer 'Henri' to you then? Formerly you called me so. Has time caused you to forget the happy days we spent together? Ah, Pauline; ah, mademoiselle, I alone have grieved, then, at so long a separation, and you, in seeing me again have not recovered your happiness."

"How unjust you are, Henri! But somebody has told me that you did not love me, that you had forgotten me. Your long absence, the little haste you have evinced in endeavoring to learn my place of abode —"

"What are you saying, Pauline? Heaven is my witness that since our separation I have done everything in my power to learn your address."

"Is that indeed true, Henri? Ah, I must believe you. What you tell me makes me so happy that I cannot afford to doubt it."

Our two lovers forgot in the pleasure of each other's society that anything existed in the world except their love; Pauline was the first to realize that they must separate.

"You must leave me, Henri. While with you I forgot that my good Madame Reinstard is expecting me, and that she will be rendered uneasy by my long absence."

"Where do you live, Pauline?"

"In that house which you see down there, near the gate of the town. I came out only to make some purchases, for Madame Reinstard is ill, and our old servant could not leave her."

"And your father?"

"My father is not at Strasburg just now, but his absence will not be long."

"Well, then, what prevents me from coming to see you?"

"Not this evening, my friend. It is too late

for my good mother to see you. Tomorrow you shall come, and we shall then have time to talk with you."

Henri could hardly consent to leave his dear Pauline, but the hope of seeing her the next day gave him new courage. He conducted his beloved right up to the door of her house, and would not leave her without permission to return again soon.

He then went back to his inn, his heart filled with happiness. There was no longer any question of returning to his father; his Pauline occupied all his thoughts, all his affections. Franck, on learning that his master had found his sweetheart again, exclaimed, —

"Why, monsieur, it was hardly worth the trouble of going so far to look for a woman who was so near us, but Fate had decreed it!"

The next day, almost before it was light, Henri was under the windows of his beloved. It was in the month of November, and the weather was beginning to prove cold. He walked up and down under the casements of his sweetheart, waiting until she should have awakened; but Pauline, who probably had not slept much either, presently half opened her Venetian shutter.

"What, is it you, my friend, so early?"

"Oh, my dear Pauline, how could I sleep when so far from you?"

"I have not slept either, as you may see, but

all the same, it is too early for a visit, monsieur, and you must go."

"Oh, Pauline, you don't love me then."

"But, my friend, Madame Reinstard is not awake yet."

"And I am dying of cold."

"You can't come in, however."

"You would rather see me freeze under your windows. How unkind."

"Well, then, wait, I'll come down."

Pauline did not delay in opening the door to him. How pretty she seemed to Henri's eyes! A simple morning wrapper covered her elegant figure. Her hair, negligently put up, shaded her modest forehead; her eyes, soft and languid, seemed afraid to fix themselves on those of her lover, everything about her inspired love. Henri could not but adore so charming a person. He remained motionless before her, and Pauline blushed with pleasure, divining well the cause of Henri's uneasiness. Where is the woman who does not understand the feeling she has inspired.

Pauline led Henri into a small room opening into the garden belonging to the house; there they waited until Madame Reinstard should arise. Time did not seem long to them, one has so many things to say when one loves. Henri related to Pauline all the adventures which had happened to him on his travels, omitting, however, those which were not of a nature to come to the ears

of his sweetheart. He in turn was extremely desirous of knowing what had happened to Pauline during his absence, — where was her father, what was the motive of his journey? — a thousand things which related, in fact, to the origin of her whom he loved and to her present situation, but he dared not question her, and preferred to wait until he had gained her confidence rather than appear curious or suspicious to her.

Pauline perceived at length that it was the hour when the one who stood to her in the place of mother was accustomed to arise for breakfast. She left Henri to go to Madame Reinstard, promising him to come soon in search of him. During her absence, he occupied himself in examining his sweetheart's dwelling. Everything there was of the greatest simplicity, and indicated that those who lived there had more taste than wealth.

"Ah," said Henri to himself, "she is not happy, I am sure, and she has not enough confidence in me to impart to me the cause of her grief, but I know how to compel her to put confidence in me. I will alleviate her sorrow, and, without wounding her pride, I shall find a way to share with her the wealth which can have no value in my eyes unless it will help me to make her happy."

What he called his wealth was the money he had won by play in Paris, and which he remembered he had not had time to dissipate, since he had left there the next day.

Pauline came to draw him from his reflections by telling him that Madame Reinstard was awaiting him at breakfast. He followed his sweetheart, and found the good lady seated beside her fire. Henri was sharply struck by the change which her illness had wrought in her, at the pallor of her countenance, and the faintness of her voice, which made it clear that she had not long to live; but he took care not to convey to Pauline ideas which would only redouble her grief.

Madame Reinstard gave Henri a most flattering welcome, and appeared charmed to see him. Breakfast passed quickly enough; Henri was near his Pauline, which was all that was necessary for his happiness. When by chance his foot touched that of his sweetheart, when his hand rested for a moment on hers, and he could read in her eyes the emotions she experienced, oh, then, he would not have changed for all the riches of the world the good fortune of finding himself with her. He easily obtained from Madame Reinstard permission to come sometimes to share their solitude — sometimes! which meant every day, for so our lovers understood the word. Pauline told him that during his absence she had greatly neglected her music, and he proposed to bring her the same evening a collection of the newest and prettiest pieces. Pauline softly pressed his hand, Madame Reinstard thanked him in advance for the pleasure he was about to procure

for her dear daughter, and Henri left, promising to return that evening, to bring Pauline what he had promised.

A month passed, during which he spent all his mornings and all his evenings with Pauline. This had grown so customary that when at his usual hour he was not at Madame Reinstard's, he found his Pauline very anxious, and looking sadly from her window to see if he were coming. Henri was at the height of his happiness, he had obtained the love of his sweetheart; Pauline no longer tried to hide from him all the love which she felt for him, and even had she wished to do so, each word, each gesture, would have told him what was passing in her heart. Madame Reinstard herself treated him as her son, and exhibited for him the most tender friendship, but then, Henri was no longer the same young man; he was no longer headstrong, a libertine, a gambler, a heedless fellow; the love which he experienced for Pauline had changed all his sentiments, for a virtuous passion can alone subdue feelings less worthy.

Henri was not long, however, in perceiving that Pauline was agitated by some secret trouble. Madame Reinstard herself was often sad and preoccupied, and he was grieved to see that day by day the health of this good lady declined; he foresaw for his Pauline a thousand dangers, a thousand embarrassments, if she who was a mother to

her should die. In vain he pressed his sweetheart to confide her grief and uneasiness to him. Pauline still avoided the question, which seemed to augment her sorrow. One day when Henri came, according to his custom, he was affrighted at seeing the old domestic who opened the door to him, weeping bitterly.

"What has happened?" he exclaimed immediately.

"O monsieur, my good mistress is very ill, and has, I believe, only a few moments to live."

Henri immediately flew to the invalid's room. He found his dear Pauline bathed in tears beside Madame Reinstard's bed. The latter, although weak, and apparently on the brink of the grave, welcomed him with a sweet smile, and in a voice that was nearly extinct addressed to him these words, —

"I have waited impatiently, my dear Henri, to see you. It is to you that I leave my cherished daughter; I charge you to console her. I have read your heart, I have divined the feeling which you experience for her; Pauline returns that feeling. You must be married, and you must never leave her."

Henri pressed his Pauline in his arms, swearing nevermore to leave her. His sweetheart had not the strength to answer him, she was overwhelmed with sorrow. Madame Reinstard, making a great effort to overcome her weakness, continued, —

"You have been astonished, my dear Henri, at the mystery which appears to envelop all the actions of your sweetheart's father; you do not know that virtuous man. When you learn his misfortunes, you will cease to condemn his conduct. I have charged my Pauline to tell you everything, nothing must be hidden from you now, for it is in you alone that she should place all her hopes."

Here Madame Reinstard, enfeebled by the efforts she had made, experienced a faintness which indicated that she had but a few moments to live. Henri and Pauline surrounded her with their arms, she opened her eyes, took her pupil's hand, which she placed in that of Henri, and slept the eternal sleep.

Henri hastened to draw Pauline from the room, he took her in his arms, and carried her to another chamber. There he did not seek to appease her regret, but with her he wept for the estimable woman whom they had lost; it was the best consolation he could offer her. Some days later, when Pauline's grief had grown a little calmer, Henri ventured to ask her to tell him the facts to which Madame Reinstard had referred; Pauline consented and informed him as to the cause of her father's absence and of his frequent journeyings.

When Pauline had related her story, Henri, knowing that her uneasiness was caused by her father's long absence, resolved to start for Paris

in order to try and find him. He therefore departed, leaving Franck to watch over Pauline's safety, and bearing with him her most ardent wishes for the success of his journey.

We know that it was about this time that Colonel Framberg and Mullern arrived at Strasburg, hoping to find Henri there, but he had left for Paris, where they followed him. There our young man was not fortunate in his researches, he scoured the capital without discovering any traces of the one for whom he was looking. At last, weary of such a useless course, and urged by the desire to see Pauline, he started on his return to Strasburg, always pursued by the colonel and Mullern, who would infallibly have caught up with him had it not been for the accident in the forest.

Henri found his Pauline awaiting him with the utmost impatience; she ran to meet him as soon as she saw him.

"Well, my dear," said she, "what news?"

"None, my dearest."

"What about my father?"

"I could discover nothing in regard to him."

"How unfortunate I am! Something has happened to him, and I shall not see him again. I have nobody in the world to take pity on an unfortunate orphan."

"What do you say?" cried Henri, vehemently. "You have nobody in the world. Am I not your lover, your husband?"

"Oh, my dear Henri, I have been reflecting during your absence, and I think that I should not aspire to such happiness. I, an orphan, without name, without fortune, become the wife of the Count von Framberg! I see nothing but the distance which lies between us."

"Is it indeed you, whom I hear, Pauline! I can by one word prove to you that you are mistaken. Tell me if, by chance, Fate had made you richer than I would you have abandoned me for that?"

"My dear, that is very different."

"No, Pauline; I am not proud enough to prefer riches to virtue and beauty. Good Madame Reinstard blessed our vows, and you have no longer the right to oppose my happiness."

What could Pauline answer. She adored Henri, she ceased to resist his entreaties, and finally consented to become his wife.

As soon as Henri had obtained her consent, he busied himself in hastening the day of their marriage, for he ardently desired to present his Pauline to the colonel.

"As soon as my father sees you," he said to her, "he can only approve my choice."

"But if he should do otherwise, my dear. If he should try to break our bonds."

"No, Pauline, you do not know my father. He is brusque, but good, sensitive; besides, it is only necessary for him to see you to love you."

Pauline smiled, and began to hope.

Henri immediately made the preparations for his marriage; he sent Franck in search of a lawyer and a chaplain, and, while waiting, Henri obtained permission from Pauline to bring his effects from the hotel, and he occupied Madame Reinstard's apartment.

Franck punctually executed his master's orders, and one evening informed him that the lawyer would come the next morning, bringing the marriage contract.

"My faith, monsieur," said he, "I was so pleased at having executed my commission, that I went into a café and drank a bottle of beer to celebrate your approaching marriage." Henri kissed Franck, kissed the old servant, he would have kissed all the world in the extremity of his delight. Pauline took part in his joy and they separated, dreaming already of tomorrow. Poor fellow, you deliver yourself up to slumber while forming a thousand chimeras for the future, and you do not reflect, like Franck, how strange destiny is, and that at the moment when we least expect it she strikes the rudest blow.

CHAPTER XI

Who Would Have Suspected It

Henri awoke at daybreak; a great happiness has the same effect as a great sorrow, it forbids one to sleep, and induces one to get up early in the morning; however, as his Pauline still slept, or at any rate was not yet down, he went into the garden to await her appearance. How impatiently did he count the minutes, the seconds! Never had they seemed so slow as on this occasion when, as it seemed to him, Time should have lent itself wings and doubled its speed to gratify his desires. Finally, Pauline, who probably had slept no better than he, came to invite him to go up to breakfast while awaiting the lawyer's arrival. Henri followed her, and seated himself beside her; together they formed their plans for the future; he already gave her the sweet name of wife. Somebody knocked softly at the door.

"It is he, it's the lawyer," cried Henri; "Franck, go and open the door to him."

Franck ran. Henri heard him coming up; his heart beat with joy. The door opened; he looked, and was stunned by surprise at seeing Mullern enter the room.

"So I've found you at last, monsieur," said Mullern, paying no attention to Pauline. "Thousand bombs! you've made us run after you."

"What! Is it you, Mullern?" answered Henri, trying to pull himself together.

"Yes, monsieur, it's me. Oh, you didn't expect me, I'm sure."

"Who is this man, my dear?" said Pauline to Henri, taking him apart.

"He's an honest soldier, who is much attached to me."

"So," said Mullern, turning and perceiving Pauline, "this is she then. My word, she is pretty, I agree with him."

Pauline blushed to her eyes, and Henri, who greatly desired to terminate the interview, begged her to go to her room for a moment, and leave him alone with Mullern. Pauline departed, greatly surprised at the manner of the newcomer.

"Now that we are alone, monsieur," said Mullern to Henri, "I hope you are going to explain your strange conduct to me."

"First of all, how is my father?"

"Very well, very well, if he had not barely missed killing himself in running after you."

"What do you mean?"

"But that has nothing do with the question; tell me, monsieur, what are you doing in this house? Who is this woman whom I found with you just now?"

"That woman? She is my wife."

"Your wife?"

"Yes, or at least very nearly — for she will be in a few moments."

"Good, I see you're not married yet."

"Do you intend to put any obstacles in the way, Mullern?"

"It is possible, monsieur."

"I warn you then, that your proceedings will be useless; for nothing in the world can separate us."

"This is fine conduct, monsieur; tell me, should one marry at your age without deigning to consult his parents?"

"But tell me, don't you think my Pauline charming yourself?"

"Oh, as to that, she's pretty enough; I agree with you as to that. But there are pretty women who are not any the better for that."

"Take care, Mullern, how you outrage the woman I love! She is as virtuous as she is beautiful!"

"Well, even if she is virtuous, which is doubtful, but not impossible, is that a reason why you should marry the first who comes along? — a woman of whose birth you are ignorant."

"You are mistaken, Mullern, I do know, she has told me all about it. I know her father, his misfortunes —"

"Bless my soul! Idle stories, all of them!"

"No, Mullern, my Pauline is incapable of lying, she has told me the truth."

"Well, let's hear this marvellous story."

"I'll tell you all she said to me. Pauline's father is French."

"French! The name of Christiern is not his own, then?"

"No, my friend, it is a fictitious name which his circumstances compelled him to take."

"Well, and what is his real name?"

"D'Ormeville."

"D'Ormeville!" cried Mullern, struck with astonishment.

"What is the matter with you?" said Henri to him.

"It is nothing; go on; I am listening to you."

Henri resumed; "You must know, then, that Pauline's father entered the army and at the age of twenty he quarrelled with another officer of his regiment; they fought a duel, and he, unhappily, killed his enemy. This was the primary cause of his misfortunes. The family of his adversary was rich and powerful. D'Ormeville was obliged to leave his country to escape an arrest which would have resulted in his losing his life. He came to Germany with the intention of taking service there. After stopping some time in the domains of the Baron von Frobourg—"

"Of the Baron von Frobourg?"

"Yes, my friend, he has, they tell me, seen my mother."

"Ah, indeed?"

"He went to Vienna and entered the emperor's service. The army was about to take part in a campaign against the Russians, but in the first engagement D'Ormeville received a severe wound from a bullet and was left for dead on the field of battle. However, a man more humane than the others perceived that he still breathed. This man was a poor peasant whom chance had led to the place where they fought. He raised D'Ormeville and carried him to his cottage, where he recalled him to life. D'Ormeville remained for more than a year in the house of this good man, for it was not until that time that his wounds were entirely healed, and his health permitted him to rejoin the corps in which he had served; but during his long illness the fortunes of war had been unfavorable to the Austrians, and at the time that he wished to rejoin the army the Russians were masters of the little village in which he had hidden. He dared not venture to leave, fearing that he would be recognized as an enemy and put to death by the Russians, who made no prisoners. D'Ormeville decided to await more favorable circumstances; he disguised himself as a simple villager and was obliged to work in the fields in order to sustain his sad existence.

"It was at this epoch that he made the acquaint-

ance of my dear Pauline's mother. D'Ormeville did not tell his daughter who she was, nor how he had come to know her. All that he said to her was that her mother died in giving birth to her. D'Ormeville brought up his daughter, awaiting with impatience the moment when he might return to Austria. The time became more favorable, the Russians were beaten, and D'Ormeville rejoined the army. His daughter was the object of all his solicitude, and he did not know to whom to confide this precious charge, when chance introduced him to Madame Reinstard. This good lady had lost her son in the army and was overcome with grief. D'Ormeville proposed to her that she should take the place of a mother to his little Pauline, who was then four years old. Madame Reinstard joyfully consented, and, as the theatre of the war constantly recalled the loss she had sustained, she left with the child to go and dwell in a little house which she owned near Offenburg, where D'Ormeville promised to rejoin her as soon as his duty would permit.

"It was there, my dear Mullern, in that pretty house, where I took you one day, that my Pauline passed her youth under the eyes of Madame Reinstard, who loved her as her daughter. D'Ormeville came there, from time to time, to pass with her the leisure which his occupation allowed him. His valor had raised him to the rank of captain; he was not ambitious and desired nothing more.

You know, my dear Mullern, the manner in which I made Pauline's acquaintance."

"Yes, yes, I know it, and I wish that the devil had stifled me the day I allowed you to go out by yourself, but go on."

"Well, my friend, about this time, D'Ormeville, tormented by a desire to see his country again, had formed the plan of going to France. Pauline would not leave her father, and Madame Reinstard consented to accompany them. They all three started for Strasburg, and on arriving here took up their abode in the house where we now are. They lived here peacefully for about eighteen months, but at the end of that time D'Ormeville, wishing to resume his true name, that he might draw his Pauline from the solitude in which they had lived, decided to go to Paris, hoping to get the unjust sentence, which had condemned him to death, annulled. But during his absence my good star —"

"Say, rather, your evil star."

"Allowed me to discover my Pauline. Our separation had only augmented our love —"

"It had done a fine thing there."

"The good Madame Reinstard blessed our union —"

"These old women are always doing something foolish."

"And we gave ourselves up without reserve to the feeling which led us toward one another.

However, Heaven deprived Pauline of the good dame who had stood in the place of a mother to her; for a long time she had received no news of her father, and was in the greatest uncertainty as to his fate. I have been to Paris in the hope of finding him, but I have unsuccessfully made all possible research, and, since destiny has deprived her of her last support, it is for me, my dear Mullern, to serve her as such. I am about to become her husband; Pauline has pledged her faith to me, she has received my vows, and I cannot believe that my father, so good, so sensitive as he is, can blame the choice that I have made."

Mullern remained for some time absorbed in his reflections. Henri, astonished at his long silence, was about to demand the cause of it, when Mullern said to him, —

"I am sorry, my dear Henri, that I am about to afflict you, but there is no way of avoiding it; you must give up this marriage."

"What are you saying, Mullern? Renounce this marriage?"

"Yes, I tell you, and go with me at once, far from this house."

"And do you believe Mullern, that I am going to obey you?"

"I hope so."

"Well, undeceive yourself. This is no passing flame; it is a true passion which unites me to my Pauline, and no power on earth can separate us."

"Come," said Mullern to himself, "I see that much as I dislike the task, I must tell him all."

He approached Henri, and took him by the hand.

"My dear Henri, I see that the time has come for me to unveil a mystery which I would fain have hidden from you forever. Pauline is your sister."

"Great God! can it be? But, no, you are mistaken, Mullern, you wish me to deceive myself."

"No, my dear Henri, I am telling you the truth. She whom you love is your sister, for Colonel Framberg is not your father. It is to D'Ormeville that you owe your birth."

Henri fell on a chair prostrated, and Mullern related in detail all that he knew as to his birth, and the noble and generous conduct of Colonel Framberg. Henri listened silently; a mute sorrow, a profound depression had succeeded his violent grief. Mullern suffered almost as much as he on seeing his state.

"Be a man, my dear Henri; do not allow yourself to be overwhelmed by your sorrow, show sentiments more worthy of those who have brought you up. Tears are of no use in such circumstances as these; it is firmness and decision which are necessary. But first, you must follow me, and leave this place."

"Follow you, Mullern, but tell me what will become of her?"

"Be easy, I know what I have to do. Do you think, besides, that Colonel Framberg, after fulfilling towards you the duties of a father for nineteen years would leave your sister alone and unprotected? No, monsieur, render him more justice than that; he loves you too much not to love her also."

"Ah, Mullern, you reanimate my courage; but who is to tell my dear Pauline of the bonds which unite us?"

"Who? Why, hang it, it will have to be me, and I will do it directly, for the longer one defers this sort of a disclosure the more it envenoms the wound. But first of all, monsieur, you must leave the house."

"Without seeing her?"

"Yes, monsieur, without seeing her. Hang it, how would it help you to see her; it would only augment your despair, and it is not worth the trouble."

"And where shall I go, Mullern?"

"No matter where; you will be better anywhere than here; besides, I will go with you; I cannot leave you alone in this state. Afterwards, I shall return here by myself and, thousand thunders! I hope that in two hours everything will be arranged."

Mullern drew Henri, rather than led him, from the house. Henri raised his eyes on the dwelling which held the one who was dearest to him in

the world, and felt his heart break at each step which took him farther from his darling. The good hussar led him to Jeanneton's aunt, and recommended him to the good woman's care, but Henri was not in a state to perceive what was passing around him. Then Mullern returned to Pauline's dwelling, forcing himself to stifle in the depths of his heart the feeling which agitated him.

Pauline awaited with anxiety Henri's return, for she believed him to be still in the house with Mullern. A secret presentiment seemed to warn her of that which was passing, and when she saw Mullern come alone into her room she felt her knees give way, and a mortal pallor overspread her face. Mullern slowly came forward, not knowing how to tell her of her lover's departure.

"I come," said he, "to bring you Henri's adieux."

"What are you saying, monsieur, is he gone?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"For long?"

"I believe so."

"And without seeing me?"

"It was necessary that he should do so."

"Great God! Then he no longer loves me," and Pauline fell unconscious into Mullern's arms. The good hussar placed her gently on a sofa; when she returned to consciousness her tears flowed freely, and she cried with a feeling of the most vivid grief, —

"He no longer loves me!"

"And if, hang it, he does love you, mademoiselle, that is exactly why I have been obliged to part you."

"What, monsieur, it is you who are doing this?"

"Yes, mademoiselle, you will detest me for it, will you not? Well, you will be wrong; I have done nothing but my duty, it was necessary to break your engagement."

"Why so, monsieur?"

"Because, mademoiselle, it is not the custom for a brother to marry his sister."

"What are you saying, a brother?"

"Yes, mademoiselle, Henri is not Colonel Framberg's son, as he believed up to this moment, but instead the son of Captain D'Ormeville."

Mullern repeated to Pauline what he had told Henri. Pauline listened in silence, only interrupting his recital with sobs. When he had finished, he strode about the room, swearing between his teeth and wiping his tears. The sight of Pauline's sorrow penetrated his heart.

"Thousand bombs!" said he, "If I were the Pope, how quickly I would give them a dispensation to marry. But I am not, nor is my colonel either; so hang it, a truce to my tears! I mustn't have a heart like a baked apple, but try and arrange things as well as possible."

"Mademoiselle," said he, approaching Pauline,

"it is necessary that you should resign yourself; I know very well it isn't easy, but where would be the merit of conquering our passions if it cost us nothing?"

"But, monsieur, shall I see him no more?"

"Yes, mademoiselle, you will see him again, but not until time shall have calmed in your hearts a passion which would be criminal, and when friendship shall have replaced a hopeless love."

"You are right, monsieur; we must part. But, alas, what will become of me without him? I have no longer friends, protectors."

"You are mistaken, mademoiselle, you have one who will stand in the place of both."

"Who can that be, monsieur?"

"He who brought up your brother, and who loves him as a son. Do you think, mademoiselle, that Colonel Framberg will abandon you?"

"I have never besought help from anyone, monsieur."

"Your pride is very much misplaced, mademoiselle, and you are going to start at once for Castle von Framberg."

"I, monsieur?"

"Yes, you, mademoiselle."

"And what right have I to do so?"

"You have forgotten already then, that you will go as Henri's sister. Do you think, mademoiselle, we shall leave you alone in the world while your brother enjoys titles and wealth which

he should share with you. No, it is decided that you go to the château; besides, that will render your brother easy about you."

"But, monsieur—"

"What, mademoiselle?"

"If Colonel Framberg should not like me?"

"Oh, he will like you, I am sure."

"Ah, but if I should not—"

"Oh, I understand, if you should not like him, you mean,—the devil! you will be very hard to please if you don't. A man who has won honor in twenty campaigns, a man whose name alone makes the enemy tremble, a man who has brought up, adopted, cherished your brother as his own son—"

"Oh, I shall love him, monsieur."

"Yes, by George you'll love him, and everything will turn out well, I'll answer for it."

When Mullern had taken a resolution he was prompt in putting it into execution. He therefore urged Pauline to immediately make a package of what was necessary to her, and to hold herself ready to start within an hour.

"But, monsieur," said Pauline to him, "how about my old servant?"

"You will take her with you, mademoiselle."

"But, monsieur, I do not know the way to the castle."

"Hang it, mademoiselle, do you take me for a child? Did you think that I was going to send

you there alone? Franck will conduct you thither."

"Franck, my brother's servant?"

"Yes, your brother's servant. Thus you perceive all obstacles are overcome. I'll go and see about the post-chaise, and this evening you will be far from Strasburg."

"And very far from Henri," thought Pauline as she saw Mullern depart. However, she saw a secret charm in going to live in the place where he whom she loved had been brought up. The Castle von Framberg would have seemed a delightful abode had she been there with him.

On leaving Pauline, Mullern sought Franck and apprised him of what he had to do. Franck, who felt before Mullern like a scholar before his master, promised him that he would faithfully fulfil his directions. Mullern, having ordered a post-chaise, thought that it was time to write to his colonel, and to inform him of all the events that had come to pass, up to the present the shortness of time had not allowed him to do so. He therefore took a pen and wrote the following letter,—

My Colonel: I have at last discovered our young man, and I flatter myself that it was not without some trouble. But it was time that I did so. Thousand bombs! An hour later and I should not have been in time, and the little one would have — but I got there, my Colonel, and I have arranged everything in the best way in the world. Henri knows everything, my Colonel, everything; it was very necessary to tell him, for the little one was his sister; and if I had not told him all, my

Colonel, a regiment of hussars would not have been able to separate them. I am sending the little one to the castle, and I am going to send Henri to you. They are both in despair, and weep in a manner that would soften a bullet of forty-eight. You see, my Colonel, that everything is going well, and I hope you will approve the course I have taken. I am, my Colonel, your faithful soldier and servant, MULLERN.

Mullern, having sealed this short and energetic epistle sent it to Colonel Framberg, recommending his messenger to make all due speed and to advise the colonel that he would arrive shortly. This business settled, he returned to Pauline in order that he might hasten her departure. Pauline, with oppressed heart, awaited the moment when Mullern should separate her from him whom she held most dear; but our hussar had gained such an ascendancy over her that as soon as she saw him she rose and silently prepared to depart. Mullern led her to the post-chaise, with her old servant, and tightly pressed her hand.

"Take courage," he said to her, "when one exhibits resignation under misfortune, one receives a recompense for it sooner or later"; then, turning towards Franck, he ordered him to lash his horses, and the post-chaise rapidly rolled away.

CHAPTER XII

A Novel Reader Will Have Already Divined It. Another Joyful Moment

"Oh," said the stout old hussar to himself, as he stood watching the post-chaise which was carrying away the unhappy Pauline, in charge of Franck and accompanied by her old servant, "if it were necessary often to conduct similar campaigns to this one, I should greatly prefer to withstand a volley from the muskets of my regiment. I hope, however, that I shall win out of this affair with honor; the worst is done once for all. I had supposed that Henri's grief and disappointment were what would cause me the most pain, and the poor fellow suffered, I must confess it; but hang it all! I know now, if I did not know it before, that a woman's tears more easily reach and vanquish the heart. I had no idea that I was so sensitive to them."

While making these reflections on his morning's work, as hard a one as he ever wished to undertake, Mullern mechanically took the road which led him to the house of Jeanneton's aunt. He entered and met the good-natured girl on the stairs and stopped her.

"Well, Jeanneton, how is my young man?"

"He is still in the same state as when you brought him."

"Oh, that rascal Love!"

"Tell me, then, Mullern, why is he so disconsolate?"

"Why, for a woman."

"Doesn't she love him? she must be difficult to please."

"Does she like him, hang it — but they cannot marry."

"I am sorry for the young man's disappointment, he appears so sensitive."

"It is I who formed him, he is my pupil."

"I compliment you on him."

Mullern hastened to go to Henri. The young man appeared absorbed in his grief, but as soon as he perceived Mullern, he arose and threw himself into his arms, and burst into a torrent of tears.

"What a child you are," said the latter to him, "Come, hang it, face the storm."

"Where is she, Mullern, come, tell me, what have you done with her?"

"She has gone, monsieur, and she has shown courage beyond that of her sex. Imitate her, my dear Henri, don't let a woman excel you in pluck. Remember the grief that you will cause to him who has served as a father to you if you give way to a useless sorrow. I don't say anything to you

about the old hussar, who educated your infancy, who loves you as his son, and whom your despair will lead to the grave. Alas, your unhappy passion stifles all other feelings in your heart, for since we have been united after so long a separation you have not even pressed my hand, you have not deigned to address to me the slightest word of friendship."

Mullern could not restrain his tears as he said these words. Henri perceived them, threw himself upon his neck, kissed him and begged him to forgive him, promising him to be more reasonable. Mullern asked nothing further of him, and peace was soon made.

"Come, my dear Henri, let us seek the colonel, I am sure that he is awaiting us impatiently."

"But why, Mullern, did he not come to Strasburg with you?"

"Because an awkward postilion upset us in the forest, about six leagues from here, and the colonel was unfortunately wounded in the leg."

"And where is he now?"

"In a little isolated house in the midst of the forest with a man whose face did not please me at all. But we were obliged to go somewhere."

Henri recalled the adventure which he had had in the same forest, and related it to Mullern.

"Oh, if I had been there," said the latter, "the other rascal would not have escaped; but you acted bravely, and I am content."

Mullern and Henri being ready to start, left Madame Tapin's house. Mullern had also to dry Jeanneton's tears, but he slipped a double louis into her hand and promised to return to see her as soon as his business would allow him to do so.

Colonel Framberg, whom he had left for such a long time in Monterranville's house, was nearly healed of his wound, and was getting ready to go to Strasburg to rejoin Mullern, when he received the letter of which the reader already knows. One may easily conceive his surprise and uneasiness on learning events which appeared to him incomprehensible, but Mullern's style was so involved that he did not know quite what was meant, and awaited with the greatest agitation the arrival of those who could put an end to his uncertainty.

Mullern and Henri reached M. de Monterranville's house the same evening. Carll opened the door to them, and Mullern struck him amicably on the shoulder, and asked him whether his master, M. de Monterranville, was with the colonel.

"Not at this moment," responded Carll, "my master has gone out."

"All the better," said Mullern to Henri. "Let us profit by that circumstance."

They went rapidly up the stairs and found the colonel pacing his room in a disquieted frame of mind. As soon as he saw Henri he opened his arms, and Henri threw himself into them.

"I will not reproach you, my dear son," he said, kissing him. "Although your heedless conduct and the little confidence you have shown in me give me the right to do so. But you are unhappy, according to what Mullern tells me, and I will not increase your suffering."

"And I, Colonel," said Mullern, advancing to him, "do you blame the course I have taken."

"No, my friend, although the letter you wrote gives me little information as to what has passed, but I hope you will now give me the amplest details."

In order to satisfy the colonel's curiosity, Henri succinctly related to him all that had happened since his departure from the castle, as well as the history of his dear Pauline, and the manner in which he had learned that he was not the colonel's son.

"Chance has rendered you aware of the secret which I should have hidden from you all my life," said the colonel. "You may rest assured that I shall never cease to take your father's place. As to your sister, she becomes my daughter, from this moment I adopt her; she shall never leave me again. When time has effaced from her heart and yours a passion which would never have existed had you been aware of the ties which united you, you shall share our happiness, and increase it still more by your presence. But just at present it is necessary that we should separate anew,

my son, in order that you may not approach her from whom you must fly. You must go still farther from Castle von Framberg, but this time Mullern shall accompany you. It is to him alone that I will confide the one so dear to me. During your absence, I shall endeavor to dry the tears of a daughter whom I already love, and that will console me for this new separation."

Henri kissed the colonel a thousand times, and expressed all the gratitude with which this noble and generous conduct inspired him. Mullern highly approved the colonel's arrangements, and the plan which he had formed was thus welcome to every one.

As the night was advanced, and the colonel, fatigued by the various sensations which he had experienced, had need of repose, they separated, with the understanding that the next morning they should all leave the house in the woods. As the colonel's room held only one bed, Mullern invited Henri to pass the night in his own. The latter consented to it, and having embraced the colonel, they left him to rest. In traversing a long passage which led to the staircase, they saw in the distance a man who was about to pass them with a light in his hand.

"That's M. de Monterranville," said Mullern to Henri; "let's pass him, I don't like that man."

But Henri thought that politeness would not allow him to spend the night in the house of a

man whom he had not saluted, and besides, he owed him thanks for the generous hospitality which he had accorded the colonel. Henri, therefore, advanced toward him, and Mullern followed reluctantly, fuming against the customs of society. M. de Monterranville stopped on seeing Henri, the latter greeted him, and was about to address to him the thanks which were his due, when raising his eyes he recognized in the gentleman before him one of the two murderers of the forest. Henri's speech froze, a sudden pallor overspread his face, he could scarcely articulate some confused words, and he led away Mullern, who did not understand the cause of this violent agitation. As to M. de Monterranville, he had not recognized Henri, because he had fled from the scene in the wood at the first sound of firearms, but as scoundrels always believe themselves to be betrayed, this one, much astonished at the uneasiness which the young man exhibited at his approach, resolved to know the cause of it in order that he might guard himself against all events. When Henri got into Mullern's room he paused to breathe more freely, then, taking the latter's hand, —

"Let us leave, my friend," said he, "let us go and awaken my father, I cannot spend the night in this house."

"Why, what's to do, hang it, tell me what all this means. What does this trouble, this terror mean?"

"Ah, Mullern, this terror is very natural."

"Are you afraid of something?"

"I fear nothing for myself, but I tremble with horror in thinking that I am under a murderer's roof."

"Under a murderer's roof?"

"Yes, Mullern. I have recognized in this M. de Monterranville one of the two men of the forest."

"Can it be? A thousand bombs! What, this rascal is —"

"One of those who tried to kill the stranger whom I saved from their hands."

"Triple cannonade!" cried Mullern, putting his hand on the handle of his sabre, "let's call on this rascal, let us punish him for his crime."

Saying these words, Mullern was about to leave the room, in order to execute his design, but Henri seized him by the arm.

"Stop, Mullern, what are you going to do?"

"Why, hang it, relieve the earth of a scoundrel, he has remained on it long enough."

"Remember, we can furnish no proof of his crime, and that we should be punished ourselves for having taken justice into our own hands."

"Hang it, you are right, but what shall we do then?"

"Listen. Now that I have reflected, I think it will be imprudent to make a disturbance that will lead to nothing, and my father will regulate

our conduct. We have nothing to fear from this man, for he could not have recognized me, and it is not us whom he wishes to harm."

"Come, hang it, since it is necessary, I will yield to your opinion, but I confess that I hardly like to do so, for I should have had much pleasure in polishing my sabre on this brigand's body."

This resolution taken, Mullern and Henri threw themselves, all dressed, on their beds, but they did not sleep for a moment. The thought that they were under the roof of a murderer revolted their frank and loyal souls.

The next day, as soon as it was light, they thought that they could go and awaken the colonel without raising any suspicion; but their precautions were needless, for Monterranville knew all. We must remember that Henri's emotion had alarmed him, and as soon as Mullern and his companion had shut themselves up in their chamber, he had gone into a room that adjoined theirs, opened a closet, and placing himself against its wall, had heard perfectly all of their conversation.

One may judge of his terror on learning that he was recognized, but their last words reassured him a little. Finding that they would wait until the next morning to decide what they would do, he thought it would be prudent not to await their decision, and promptly left the house in the middle of the night.

Colonel Framberg opened the door to his com-

panions, astonished at being awakened so early in the morning, and still more so on seeing with what precaution Mullern reclosed the door of his chamber, and the air of mystery which was expressed in their countenances. Horror and indignation succeeded his surprise, when he learned with whom he had been staying for so long a time. However, he ordered Mullern and Henri to restrain themselves, and to do nothing.

"What, my Colonel?" said Mullern, "you mean that we are not to confound this scoundrel."

"No, Mullern, our duty is opposed to it. Reflect that for nearly a month I have received hospitality in this house, the master is a monster, but it is not for me to arm justice against him; besides, you may be easy, Mullern, for, believe me, if he escapes for an instant the punishment which is his due, it is only that he may fall later under the arm of the law."

"Since you wish it, Colonel, I obey."

"It must be so for under any other circumstances I should have been the first, my friends, to advise you to cleanse the earth of this scoundrel, but we will remain no longer in this haunt of crime. I long to go and breathe an air which has not been soiled by the breath of a brigand."

Saying these words, the colonel left his chamber, Henri and Mullern following him. They found Carll in the courtyard, and learned from him that his master had gone before daybreak.

"He has done well," said Mullern, between his teeth, "for, hang it! had I seen him, I could not have mastered my indignation."

The colonel mounted his horse, Henri and Mullern followed his example, and they pressed their animals that they might depart more rapidly from this house which inspired them with so much horror.

Our three travellers arrived at Strasburg, and alighted at the best inn, that they might rest for a short time before separating.

"My dear Henri," said Colonel Framberg to our hero, when they were alone, "I have no orders to give you concerning your future conduct, and I leave entirely in Mullern's hands the charge of caring for your happiness. If, perchance, you feel desirous of entering a military career in the hope of finding distraction more readily, I will not constrain your desires, but, on the contrary, will do everything possible to facilitate them. However, I beg of you, whatever you decide upon, let me know of it in advance."

Henri promised the colonel to do nothing without consulting him. The secret grief which he hid in the depths of his soul, and which he forced himself to hide from his friends, rendered him incapable of forming any plans as to his conduct or as to the future. One object alone occupied his thoughts, despite all the efforts which he was making to banish it.

As to Mullern, he ardently desired that his dear pupil should enter the army.

"Why," said he, to Henri, "after twenty years of peace I should yet see joyfully a field of battle, and the old companions of my glory."

Henri did not answer, but Mullern hoped that the military scenes which he should frequently recount to him would awaken his desire, and that he would at length yield to his wishes. In this hope he invited Henri to take the route to Vienna, and the latter consented.

Colonel Framberg said good-by to Henri. The latter asked him why he did not accompany them to Offenburg, but the colonel excused himself under the pretext that some business still kept him in France. This, in truth, was not his motive. He did not wish to impart to Henri a plan which he had conceived, for fear that he should be unsuccessful in his enterprise. However, he confided his design to Mullern, and ordered him to maintain the most profound secrecy in regard to it. The latter promised him, lost in admiration of the colonel's conduct.

Henri, having embraced the colonel, and expressed the desire of seeing him again soon, followed by Mullern, again took the road for Germany.

We will leave Colonel Framberg preparing to repair to Paris to accomplish his noble plan, and will put ourselves en route with our two travellers

that we may see what method Mullern took to cure Henri of the grief which consumed him. Our hussar and his pupil were travelling on horseback.

"It is the best method of finding distraction," said Mullern to Henri. "Wait, monsieur, glance around you on this superb view which spreads before our eyes, see the vast solitudes of the Black Forest which extend so far on the side of Freudenstadt, on the other side the pretty town of Offenburg, which we leave behind us to bury ourselves in this verdurous prairie; the birds singing the return of springtime, the ploughmen returning from their rustic labors. In truth, monsieur, all this elevates the soul, and gives me an eloquence of which I had not deemed myself capable."

Henri smiled as he listened to Mullern, and the latter, charmed at having drawn him for an instant from his sad reflections, continued his discourse upon the beauties of Nature. While listening to Mullern's descriptions, Henri perceived that without paying any attention to it they had taken the way to the Castle von Framberg. He carefully refrained from remarking upon it to his companion, but the latter was not long in perceiving it for himself.

"Oh," said he, suddenly stopping his horse, "I see that with my fine discourse I have led you where it was quite unnecessary for us to go. Come, hang it, let us retrace our way."

"Why should we do that, my dear Mullern."

"Because, monsieur, it was not my intention to take you to the colonel's castle."

"Oh, Mullern, I should have a great deal of pleasure in seeing it again."

"That's possible, monsieur; you will, however, see it later on, but now it cannot be."

"And you say that you wish to distract me from my grief, Mullern? Do you think that there could be a more agreeable distraction for me than the pleasure I should experience in visiting the dear place where I passed my infancy, the place where I received from you all those lessons which taught me to be a man, the place which I have not seen for more than two years."

Mullern, softened by Henri's speech, did not know how to refuse him that which he asked with so much insistence.

"But hang it! monsieur," he said at length, assuming a severe tone to impose on Henri, "don't you know that your sister is now in this castle, and that you would be very foolish to try to see her?"

"And did you think, Mullern, that such was my design. No, I wish only to approach the castle, to visit the neighborhood, and see the park and the gardens where I found my earliest pleasures, and depart to return here in happier days."

"But you might meet your sister."

"No, my friend; is it likely that chance will

lead her exactly where I am? I shall avoid such a meeting; besides, you shall not leave me."

"Come, since you wish it, I consent to that. But, hang it! at the first approach of a woman, remember that I shall insist on your galloping off as fast as you can go."

"I will do all that you wish."

"I am, in truth, too complaisant, but it is already dark. You will understand, monsieur, that it is not the moment for visiting the park and gardens, since we are still two leagues distant from the castle."

"Well, then, Mullern, let's pass the night in the neighborhood — in that farm that you see down there; certainly, no one can refuse us a night's rest, and tomorrow morning, as soon as day breaks, we can take our way to the castle."

"So be it," said Mullern, "let us sleep at the farm."

Our travellers approached the farm, and Mullern thought he recognized the house where, when seeking his pupil, such a comical adventure had befallen him; he resolved to assure himself if his conjectures were well founded.

Night was falling, the door of the court was still open; Mullern entered first. Each object which met his eyes confirmed his suspicions. Presently he came upon the farmer occupied in the stable, but he left his work as soon as he saw them and came to meet them, bowing very respectfully.

"What do these gentlemen wish?"

"To sleep here, if that be possible," said Henri to the farmer.

"You see before you," said Mullern, advancing, "the son of the Count von Framberg, lord of the castle which lies two leagues from here, and Sergeant-major Mullern, formerly in the emperor's hussars and now the count's governor."

The farmer opened his eyes wide on hearing all these titles, although he did not understand much about them, and called lustily for his servants, that they might prepare everything for these gentlemen.

"Hallo there, Grosjean! Pierre! — come along, then, you fellows!" Grosjean immediately came down.

"Where is Pierre, I wonder?" said the farmer to the latter.

"Mercy, master, I don't know! Perhaps he's helping the mistress."

Mullern recalled the fact that Pierre had been on very friendly terms with the farmer's wife, and presumed from Grosjean's speech that they still held to their ancient usages.

However, the farmer's shouts brought Dame Catherine and Pierre, who came by different ways, both as red as lobsters.

"Come, wife, bestir yourself and try to get some supper for these gentlemen, while Pierre makes their beds."

The farmer's wife, who was alert, had soon served supper. Mullern examined her with some curiosity, for on the occasion of his previous visit to the farm, he had only seen her, or rather had not seen her, in the dark, and he now discovered with pleasure that the dame had her merits, and that though she was by no means as young as Jeanneton, she was still sufficiently attractive.

Catherine had led the travellers into a room on the groundfloor, and while preparing their supper she was quick to notice Mullern's glances, although she did not allow it to appear. An old soldier of fifty has not very much in common with a bachelor of twenty, but when one has a young lover near one every day, one may take pleasure in flirting with a hussar, without prejudice to the former.

Henri, who lived only in the hope of the morrow, ate little and retired to his room in order to get some sleep; but Mullern, who greatly desired to see what would develop, remained at the table and invited the farmer to drink a cup with him and chat for a while.

Mullern, as they say, drank hard. The farmer wished to keep him in countenance, and the conversation soon became heated.

"Do you know, Monsieur le Hussar, that the title you have given of sergeant-major of the Count von Framberg recalls to me an event which happened nearly three years ago — say, don't you

remember, wife, that rascal, who wished also to pass for a hussar?"

"Yes, yes, I remember," said the farmer's wife, smiling.

"What was this adventure?" asked Mullern of the farmer.

"Why, hang it, I was just going to tell you — it was well into the middle of the night when a robber came knocking at our door. My wife had gone to bed, my men were asleep. No one was up but me, and I was casting my accounts in this room. I went to ask who knocked. Well, then, he had the effrontery to tell me that he was a sergeant-major, pupil of the Count von Framberg, in fact, he pretended to be what you are — that's all."

"What?" said the farmer's wife to her husband, "monsieur has the same names as the robber gave you?"

"Yes, Catherine, you may see by that how he lied, the scamp!"

The farmer's wife suspected how it was, and warned by a knock from Mullern's knee saw that she had rightly divined. The farmer seeing how much his history amused his guest embellished it with all possible details. Mullern was careful not to interrupt him, and contented himself with pouring drink for him every moment, and the farmer's wife, who foresaw where that led, reproached her husband with being more abstemious than usual,

and not doing honor to their guest in thus holding himself in reserve. In endeavoring to compete with the hussar, the farmer was presently unable to see what was passing around him; he snored in a manner to make one believe that he was not likely to awaken again. Mullern seized this favorable moment to give a military kiss to Dame Catherine, and I do not know if the presence of her husband would have deterred him from paying further compliments, had not the farmer's wife, under pretence of defending herself, escaped into her chamber.

At the break of day Mullern came and seated himself near the farmer, who was still snoring, and his fatigue induced him to close his eyes and to accompany him. Henri, who impatiently awaited the moment when he should again see the Castle von Framberg arose as soon as he saw the sun color the horizon.

"Where is Mullern?" asked he of one of the farm men whom he found in the courtyard.

"Oh, he is snoring like a good fellow by the side of our master."

"What, he is still asleep?"

"Yes, monsieur. Mercy, they must have supped well yesterday."

"I don't wish to awaken him; you will tell him, my good fellow, to come and join me at the castle."

"Very well, monsieur."

Henri, who was delighted at the chance which permitted him to go where he pleased, mounted his horse immediately, and hastened towards the castle. As he drew near the place where he had passed the happiest moments of his life, he felt his heart beat deliciously. A new feeling agitated his soul. His horse was lively, and responded to his desire to reach the castle as soon as possible. Arrived at the park gate Henri tied his horse to a tree, and softly entered the precinct. With what joy he saw each path which recalled to him the time when his pleasure had consisted in destroying the gardener's fresh beds. How sweet are the remembrances of our infancy, but why should they bring with them a secret melancholy; it is because one knows that the times one regrets will never come back again. At a turn in the pathway Henri met the gardener face to face; the good man recognized his young master, and was about to utter some exclamations of joy.

"Silence," said Henri to him, "I don't wish that the people of the castle should know of my arrival."

"Oh, that's different, monsieur; then I'll hold my tongue."

"Where is your son?"

"Monsieur, he is in the castle, or so I presume."

"Well, go and look for him, and tell him I will wait for him here."

"Yes, monsieur."

"But remember to be discreet with the other servants."

"Be easy, monsieur, I'll do as you wish."

The gardener ran to execute his commission, and Henri impatiently awaited Franck's arrival. He had so many things to ask of him, so many questions to put to him. His only fear was lest Mullern should come and upset all his plans; but at last he saw Franck come running, and flew to meet him.

"Oh, here you are, my poor Franck, how pleased I am to see you."

"I am pleased, too, monsieur; I confess that I didn't expect you; but destiny is so strange; so many things have passed since we saw each other last."

"You're right, Franck, and I am waiting for you to tell me all that has happened to you."

"Willingly, monsieur," said Franck, sighing.

Henri noticed this sigh; he perceived that Franck had a sad, constrained air.

"Great God!" cried he, "what have you to tell me Franck, has something happened to my Pauline — my sister?"

"Nothing has positively happened to her, monsieur, — however — "

"Well, then — "

"However, at this moment — "

"At this moment?"

"It is — she is — she is —"

"Speak at once, sirrah, you make me die with impatience."

"Mercy, monsieur, it's because I dare not tell you."

"Speak, hide nothing from me, I command you."

"Well, then, monsieur, Mademoiselle Pauline is very ill, and now they fear for her life."

"Good God!" cried Henri, with an accent of despair; "I must go to her."

"Wait, monsieur," said Franck, holding him by his coat, "unless you wish to kill her at once. The emotion caused by your unexpected presence would make her much worse."

"Oh, Franck, may I not see her then?"

"If possible, monsieur, you shall see her when she can bear your visit, and when I shall have warned her of your return."

"But tell me why I find her in this state."

"Willingly, monsieur, it will not take long. When we left Strasburg, Mademoiselle Pauline showed a firmness, a resignation which astonished me. I did not doubt that she suffered in the depths of her heart, but Mullern's presence and his words had given her a courage which could not last. Our journey was very sad, as you may imagine, and in vain I sought to distract her by speaking to her now and then, but she maintained the utmost silence; however, as we approached

the Castle von Framberg she appeared to be moved by a new feeling. She asked me if that was the place where you were born, if there were many people in the castle, and if the colonel was there? When she learned that he was not, she appeared more reassured and went into the castle calmly enough. I made them give her, according to Mullern's orders, one of the most agreeable apartments; I conducted her through the park and gardens, and showed her everything that was beautiful about the castle. She thanked me for what she called my politeness with the sweet smile that you remember, but all these attentions could not prevent her from falling ill on the day after her arrival. Since that day she has gone from worse to worse, and since yesterday she has been in the height of delirium."

"She is delirious. Great God!" cried Henri, "give me the strength to bear so much sorrow. But tell me, Franck, does she still speak of me?"

"I should think so, indeed. Sometimes she is calling you at the top of her voice, naming you by turn her husband and her brother; sometimes it is her father who is the object of her tears and her wishes; but more often it is you, monsieur, for whom she insistently asks, and in a manner so sad that it makes one ill to hear her."

Henri, overwhelmed by Franck's story, remained for some moments unable to utter a single word. Then he rose hastily from the bank

of grass on which he had been seated and ran with all his might toward the castle.

"In the name of heaven, stop," said Franck, running after him and holding by his coat.

"Let me go, Franck, let me go; I must see her, I will see her,"

"Well, thousand thunders! you shall not see her," said a blunt voice, which caused Henri to turn his head; he perceived Mullern, who was barring his passage, and did not seem to be in a humor to yield it to him.

CHAPTER XIII

Love Is Not Always Productive of Good

Upon his awakening in the morning the honest farmer was not at all astonished at finding Mullern sleeping beside him; but when the latter individual opened his eyes and became fully aware that Henri had made a clandestine departure, and thus taken the wind out of his sails, he swore heartily at himself for allowing a woman, at his time of life, to entice him so foolishly to forget his duty. Then he forthwith prepared to follow his pupil.

"Mercy, what are you making such a fuss about?" said the farmer. "I am sure it is not very astonishing that both you and I slept so late this morning; we drank long and hard last night."

"That's true," answered Mullern, "and then your wine is of a kind that goes devilishly to the head."

The farmer's wife came down at this moment, and Mullern, fearing that she might tempt him to delay his departure, hastened to mount his horse. The hospitable farmer invited him with hearty kindness to come often to hobnob with

him, and the wife added her invitation to that of her husband.

Mullern reached the castle a short time after Henri, and he was about to search the grounds when he perceived him coming toward him. On hearing Henri's last words he was doubtful how to act, not knowing the cause of his despair.

"Where are you going, monsieur," said he to Henri, as he stopped.

"To the castle, Mullern."

"What are you going there for?"

"To see her."

"You told me you would not go."

"Oh, my friend, she is dying."

"Dying, that's a little strong — Is it true Franck?"

"Yes, Monsieur Mullern, it is the truth."

"I will go and assure myself of it; but it will be useless for you to follow me. If she is in the state you tell me you cannot recall her to life; on the contrary, if she is not so ill, the sight of you will renew her grief without solacing it."

"Ah, Mullern, let me come with you?"

"Monsieur, you forget that it is your sister who is concerned, and that your conduct is not such as it should be."

"Despite your remonstrances, I shall not leave the castle until I am sure of her fate."

"Humph," said Mullern to himself, "it is necessary to break this love, no matter what the

cost may be. Go and wait for me in the gardener's house at the end of the park," said he to Henri. "I will go to you there and will tell you all that you wish to know as soon as possible."

Henri dared not resist, and followed Franck, who led him to his father's cottage, situated at the other extremity of the gardens, at some distance from the castle. As to Mullern, he looked after Henri, repenting of the weakness he had shown in allowing him to come to the castle, and considering what means he could use to get him away. Henri awaited Mullern's return with an anxiety difficult to describe. However, the hours rolled by and the hussar did not come. Henri, as night approached, could not control his uneasiness, and sent Franck to the castle to learn the cause of the delay. Franck was just leaving when Henri saw someone coming towards him; despite the darkness, he recognized Mullern and flew to meet him. He was not mistaken, it was our hussar.

"Well, Mullern," said Henri, "what kept you so long at the castle? In heaven's name tell me what has passed."

"Nothing," answered Mullern, in a gloomy voice, continuing to walk towards the gardener's house."

"How did you leave Pauline?"

"She has nothing more to fear."

"What do you mean to say? Speak, your silence chills me with terror."

"You wish me to tell you — why, then, arm yourself with courage, your sister, — your sister is no more."

Henri heard no further, he fell unconscious.

"Come, the crisis is strong," said Mullern, "but it will not last long," and he gave all his attention to bringing Henri to his senses. Aided by the gardener, who came running at his cries, he carried him to the cottage and put him to bed. The young man only opened his eyes to fall again into a more alarming fit than the one he came out of. A high fever had seized him, and an alarming delirium deprived him of reason; he saw, he recognized nobody. Mullern, dismayed at Henri's state, thumped his head and tore his hair, and appeared to blame himself as the only cause of the illness which had overwhelmed his dear pupil. Our hero remained for five days in that state, and Mullern passed all his time near his bed. At last nature, stronger than illness, recalled Henri to existence, and on the sixth day he recovered his reason and with it a little more tranquillity.

"Well, the crisis is passed," said Mullern, seeing Henri calmer. "My faith, it has been severe, and if you had succumbed, there would have been nothing for me to do but to go and keep company with the frogs in the castle moat. But you are returning to health and I feel myself relieved of a bullet of thirty-six which has been pressing on my breast."

"My poor Mullern," said Henri, smiling, "how much trouble I give you."

"Recover your health, your courage above all, and I shall be paid for my trouble."

Henri promised all, and Mullern kissed him, weeping with joy. It was a fortnight before Henri could leave his bed, but Mullern never left his pupil. Henri sometimes asked why Franck never came to see him.

"I've told Franck to go and look for a good carriage for us to travel in when you are ready to start, and that is why you don't see him here; besides, are you not satisfied with my care that you ask for your servant?"

"You are unjust, Mullern, if I asked for Franck it is that you may take the repose of which you have so much need."

"Be easy, my rest is to see you return to health."

"My good Mullern."

When Henri was able to go out a little, Mullern took him into the country by a little door which was a few steps from the gardener's house.

"Why should we go out of the castle grounds," said Henri to Mullern.

"Because the sight of the country will distract you more than that of the park, which you have seen a hundred times."

"But, Mullern, I always review it with so much pleasure."

"No, monsieur, you only pretend that, and you shall not go."

Henri dared not resist; however, he felt from the depths of his heart the most lively desire to see again those places which he was about to leave, perhaps for a very long time. When Mullern believed that Henri was strong enough to commence his journey, he told him that in two days they would leave the castle.

"Franck has returned, then," said he.

"Yes, and the post-chaise will wait for us before the little gate which is near here and which opens on the road."

"What! Are we not going to leave from the castle?"

"You see that it is needless."

Henri dared not reply, but he swore that he would not leave without visiting for the last time the home of his infancy. On the eve of the day fixed for their departure, Mullern was overcome with fatigue and begged Henri to go to bed early; Henri had made his plans, so he pretended to yield to Mullern's desire. Our hussar went to bed and was not long in going to sleep. When Henri was certain of this he rose cautiously, softly left the cottage and took the way to the castle.

The evening was superb, the light of a magnificent moon shed over the scene a bluish tint; and, in fixing his eye upon a clump of shrubbery, he thought he distinguished a motionless shadow,

a strange face. It is at such times as these that a thousand objects meet our sight, trouble our imagination, which are, however, only reflections produced by the queen of the night. Henri walked with trembling steps; his mind, enfeebled by his illness, begot a thousand fancies. Each object caused his heart to beat loudly; a secret presentiment seemed to warn him that something extraordinary was about to occur.

He came at last to that part of the park which was very near the castle; unable longer to master his agitation he entered a cluster of shrubbery to seat himself for a moment till he could regain his calm. But something struck his sight; on the bench before him he distinguished a white shadow which appeared motionless, and unconscious of his presence. Henri could not command his emotion, he was forced to support himself against a tree, but the shade arose, advanced slowly toward him, a ray of moonlight shone on her face, he recognized it.

"Shade of my Pauline!" cried he, falling on his knees before her, "have you left your celestial abode to come and visit him who cannot henceforth be happy on an earth where you do not dwell with him?"

"Henri," said a feeble voice, and Pauline, for it was she, fell unconscious before her lover.

"Great Heaven!" cried Henri, "is it an illusion, but no, it is indeed she, it is my Pauline.

Heaven, touched by my despair, has restored her to me, never to separate us again."

Henri hastened to assist his sweetheart. Pauline opened her eyes; she recognized Henri and smiled tenderly. She was in the arms of him from whom she believed she had separated forever. Henri, at the height of joy pressed her against his heart and covered her with kisses. They both forgot the natural ties which united them to dream of nothing but a love which misled them and allured them into an abysm of which they were unconscious until it was too late. Repentance usually follows close upon a fault, but in this case the fault was not one which a lover can cause to be forgotten by new caresses. Henri dared not raise his eyes to Pauline, who wept, and again became unconscious. Henri did not dream of succoring her whose misery he had caused; he rapidly fled from the fatal spot, buried himself in the park, reached the country, and disappeared from the castle.

Poor Pauline, who will come to dry your tears, calm your despair? He has left you who alone could lighten your sufferings; he has left you, swearing never to see you again; but Heaven will take pity upon your misfortunes, he will send you a friend, a consoler, when you are murmuring against Providence and against the rigor of your destiny.

First of all, we must explain to the reader how

Pauline, who was supposed to be dead, found herself with Henri in the shrubbery. We have seen how disturbed Mullern was because Henri would not leave the castle during his sister's illness. The good hussar saw very well that the young man still hid in the depths of his heart a passion which would make him unhappy for the rest of his life, and he resolved to extinguish it by violent means. On learning of the illness of Pauline the idea immediately came to him to make it appear that she was dead. He went to see the young invalid to assure himself first as to her condition. He found Pauline very ill, and thought that what he had imagined as a pretence would soon become a truth. However, he would not await the event, and the same evening, on returning to Henri, he put his plan into execution. Despite the grief which he knew awaited him when Henri should learn the worst, he had not believed that his stratagem would produce so violent an effect, and when he saw his dear pupil at the door of the tomb he repented of the means he had employed to cure him of his love. At last Henri recovered his health and Mullern began to breathe freely. During Henri's illness, Mullern had learned through Franck that Pauline was almost entirely well, but as the crisis had passed he would not tell Henri this news, and resolved to sustain him in an error which would render him content. This was why he was careful to send Franck

away from his master and to prevent Henri from walking in the castle grounds.

Mullern's plan had been well conceived, but destiny would not allow it to be put into execution. Pauline, who for some days had taken the air in the castle gardens, attracted by the beauty of the evening had seated herself in a clump of shrubbery, and while reflecting had forgotten that the hour for retiring had long since passed. We have seen the means which fate had taken to reunite the two lovers and to upset in one minute all our hussar's plans.

But Mullern could not always sleep, the remembrance of the journey which he was to undertake awakened him at daybreak. He rose, dressed himself, and ran to Henri's bed to learn if he had passed a good night. What was his astonishment, his uneasiness, on finding that he was not in the cottage.

"Come," said he, "my young man is playing some of his tricks. I must lose no time in getting after him." And already Mullern was in the park, which he searched on every side; at last chance led him to the fatal shrubbery; at a distance he believed he could distinguish something, and he saw Pauline extended unconscious on the ground. Our hussar did not amuse himself by making conjectures, "The devil's mixed himself up in it," said he; "they have seen each other, talked with each other, and the action has been

warm, or so it seems to me; but where is my pupil, then?" While waiting for an answer to this question, Mullern put Pauline on his shoulder and took the way to the château. Everybody was still sleeping, but at the noise which he made they were presently on foot, the servants coming in their shirts to learn what had happened.

"Come, thousand bombs! my friends, it's necessary that you should all search the country immediately; your young master is out of his mind. I see well that it's useless to hide it from you any longer, follow his steps, let each one take the road and follow him, though it be to the end of the world. I will come presently myself to join you."

So saying Mullern pushed them one over the other towards the country.

Some of them were mutinous, and observed that they could not go in their shirts, but Mullern with a kick sent them flying out of the door, and nobody could resist this last argument. Having sent his ambassadors into the country, Mullern hastened to return to Pauline, and to lavish upon her all the attention necessary to restore her. After a good deal of trouble she opened her eyes. Henri, was the first word she pronounced, when she perceived Mullern at her side.

"Yes, I notice that you are surprised to see me," said our hussar, "and I assure you that I

should like to be a hundred leagues away from you, but it must be confessed that Franck was right in saying that these things are determined by destiny."

Pauline did not understand the greater part of this speech, but Mullern explained to her what he wished to say, and the manner in which he had found her in the shrubbery.

"And Henri, what has become of him?" demanded Pauline.

"He feared my remonstrances, and he has taken flight; he ought, however, to know that, despite my air of severity, my heart isn't as hard as a rock." But Mullern did not yet suspect the enormity of Henri's fault. After endeavoring to console Pauline, he left her in her room to go in search of the fugitive. Pauline as soon as she was alone gave free vent to her tears. She feared and desired at the same time that Mullern should bring Henri; sometimes reason and duty made her dread his return; but love, stronger than all other feelings, always came uppermost, and finished by carrying her away. However, all the servants returned to the castle without bringing any news of Henri. The next day they made the same effort without any success. The days — the weeks passed, and he did not return. Mullern did not lose courage, and sometimes was absent for a week at a time in the hope of being more successful; but when two months had elapsed he began

to lose patience, and consigned to the worker of all evil him whom, at the bottom of his heart, he desired so much to recover.

"But after all, why should he fly like this," said Mullern to Pauline, when they were alone. "I had forbidden him to see you, it's true, but I didn't advise him to become a fool."

Pauline lowered her eyes and did not answer. Mullern seeing that his questions embarrassed her, changed the conversation, and endeavored to distract her. The poor child seemed in great need of distraction; she was no longer the Pauline that she had been a year ago, so fresh, so pretty, her beaming eyes indicating happiness and health; her tears had dimmed their brightness, her pale and withered skin betrayed her suffering of soul, and everything about her announced a victim of love. As time rolled on, the grief of Pauline seemed to augment; she passed her days shut up in her room, or weeping in the depths of the solitary shrubbery. Mullern supposed this was due to the trouble she experienced at Henri's flight. Our good hussar was scarcely gayer than herself, and hardly in a state to console her.

One evening when Mullern had left the castle to breathe the tranquil country air, he perceived from afar a woman whose disordered walk indicated some extraordinary design.

"Why," said Mullern, "who is this woman."

The darkness of the night, however, prevented

him from recognizing her, but, finally, he followed her, in order to satisfy his curiosity. The stranger rapidly crossed a little clump of wood which led to the edge of a pool situated at a short distance from the village. She took the most devious paths, appearing to fear that she should be perceived, and paused from time to time to see that she was not followed. Mullern at such times hid behind a tree, holding his breath, and making not the slightest movement. In this manner they arrived together at the edge of the water. Then the unknown paused on a kind of hillock which overlooked the pool, and fell on her knees. Mullern stopped also; a secret terror had seized his heart. Presently a plaintive voice pronounced the following words,—

"O my God, forgive the sin I am about to commit; take pity on my despair, and do not pour out your vengeance upon him who shared my crime, and for whom I sacrifice an existence which I have no longer the strength to support."

Mullern heard no further, having recognized the voice, he ran towards her whom he wished to save; but he was too late. Pauline, for it was she, had already thrown herself into the midst of the water. Our hussar, without waiting a single instant, threw aside his hat, his coat, and all that could embarrass him, and threw himself into the pond, reached the drowning woman, seized her forcibly, drew her towards the edge, and thanked

Heaven that it had seconded his efforts. Mullern laid Pauline on the earth, but she was inanimate, and her state demanded prompt attention. How could he give it, however. It was late, all the villagers were asleep; there was only one thing to do, and that was to return to the château. They were far away from it, and the good hussar felt harassed by all the shocks which he had experienced, but the desire to do a good action renewed his strength. He put Pauline on his shoulder, and charged with this precious burden courageously took the way to the castle. After an hour's walking Mullern reached the end of his journey; everybody had already gone to bed, but he always carried the key of the little door into the park. He placed Pauline on the ground and opened this door. On taking Pauline in his arms he had felt that her heart beat, and that she breathed slightly.

"Come," said he, "she is not dead, and I am repaid for my trouble."

The movement of walking effectually reanimated Pauline's senses, and when Mullern had placed her on her bed she opened her eyes. Had she not done so, he would have needed the help of others.

"Where am I?" said she, looking around her, with an expression in which astonishment and grief were mingled.

"In a place which you will not leave hereafter

without my permission," answered Mullern, in a severe tone.

"How did I get here?"

"How did you get here? You got here because I followed you, mademoiselle, and Heaven allowed me to arrive in time to prevent your crime. But now tell me how it happens that you were carried to such an excess of unreason? Whence this despair which agitates your mind? What frenzy troubles your reason? You are silent; speak, mademoiselle, it is not by silence that one excuses a crime like yours; yes, a crime, I repeat, and what can be the motive of it? It is always a crime to rid one's self of life. I esteem the unfortunate who bear their sorrows with courage, I despise those who deliver themselves by a cowardly action."

Pauline listened attentively to Mullern, and his words had the effect upon her that he expected. They softened her heart, and she burst into a shower of tears. As soon as Mullern saw her grief he felt that he must abandon his severity, and reproached himself for it.

"Come, I forgive you," said he, "but upon one condition."

"What is that?"

"It is that you tell me the motive of your despair, for it must be that you have one."

"Oh, do not force me to blush before you, in telling of my shame."

"You must do it, I tell you. Come, be more courageous."

"You order me. O my God! what will it cost me to do what he asks."

"Come, out with it."

"I am —"

"You are —"

"I am about to become a mother."

Mullern was stunned. Pauline hid her face in her hands.

"You are about to become a mother," said Mullern at last, rousing himself from his stupefaction; "and you wished to take your own life, unhappy woman! and you wished, also, to kill the innocent victim you bear within you. Ah, you are guiltier than I had thought."

"I feel only too deeply my crime, but, alas, this unfortunate creature which I should have deprived of life, is it not, before its birth, condemned to shame and contempt? The child of crime and of misfortune, will it ever dare to own the author of its being."

"What do you mean?"

"Must you learn, then, who is its father?"

"What, Henri, my pupil. O triple thunder! This cuts me to the quick. There is nothing left for me but a bullet of forty-eight."

Pauline's confession had deprived her of her last remnant of strength and she relapsed into unconsciousness on her bed. As for Mullern, his

spirits were too much depressed with what he had learned for him to be capable of seeing what was going on around him. Motionless before the hearth he looked without seeing, reflected without thinking, suffered without feeling, and the night rolled by without his awakening from his bewilderment. A double knocking on the door recalled Mullern to himself. He rubbed his eyes and seemed to awake from a painful dream, looked about him with an expression of surprise, and perceived Pauline, who was still in the same state. The sight of her recalled to the hussar all that had passed; two big tears escaped from his eyes. He dried them, twisted his mustache, and patiently went downstairs. They continued to knock with violence, the porter was slowly dressing himself, and Mullern, rendered impatient, opened the door. A courier put a note in his hand and departed rapidly, saying that there was no answer. Mullern held the letter in his hand and did not think of reading it, until, casting his eyes on the address he recognized the colonel's handwriting.

"Oh," said he rubbing his eyes to assure himself that he was not dreaming, "it is indeed from the colonel and addressed to me. By what chance does he know that I am in the castle? And this beast of a courier who went off like a bomb. I should like to question him. Come, let's read this; I feel that I tremble for the first time in my

life. If the colonel knows all that has happened, this letter is my condemnation. No matter, I deserve to be punished and I shall have the courage to execute myself if the colonel orders it."

So saying Mullern brusquely opened the letter and read the contents. As he read a change passed over his face, tears escaped from his eyes; but they were tears of joy, of pleasure, of tenderness. Hardly had he finished reading it, when he dashed like a madman up the staircase which led to Pauline's apartment.

"Hurrah! Victory!" cried Mullern, ascending four steps at a time. When he reached Pauline's room, her chambermaid had brought her to herself; she looked at Mullern in astonishment, she could not understand his extraordinary joy.

"Take it. Read it yourself," said Mullern to her, giving her the letter, "and you will see if I am wrong to be at the height of my joy."

But before explaining to the reader the reason of Mullern's sudden joy and the contents of the letter which had caused it, we must rejoin Colonel Framberg, whom we left ready to start for Paris.

CHAPTER XIV

Happiness. Uninteresting, but Necessary. A Blow from Fate

The colonel had listened with the greatest attention and interest to Henri's brief account of D'Ormeville's adventures and misfortunes. The narration awakened the utmost sympathy in his noble and generous soul and he had immediately conceived the plan of betaking himself to Paris, and of there taking all of the necessary steps towards learning what had become of his dear Henri's father. To tell the truth, the latter had already unsuccessfully made this research; but then, Henri knew nobody in Paris, and his extreme youth and inexperience were hardly likely to inspire those of whom he made his inquiries with confidence. The colonel, on the contrary, was of an age and a rank which could not fail to command respect and esteem; he obtained from prominent connections urgent letters to men in office, and had every hope of being more successful in his enterprise than had been his adopted son.

Once in Paris, Colonel Framberg acted with the utmost diligence in the matter in hand, and

on his arrival in Paris he immediately took measures to make the necessary researches, in order to learn what had become of D'Ormeville. His inquiries met with speedy success. The minister apprised the colonel that the one for whom he was searching was imprisoned at La Force, one of the principal prisons of the capital. D'Ormeville had been arrested on his arrival in Paris, and the sentence of death, which had been hanging over him for so many years, had been commuted to ten years in prison. This was a great concession in itself; and as the persons who had acted against D'Ormeville were no longer living, he hoped soon to recover his liberty. But in order to procure a pardon, it was necessary that the prisoner should have some one in France who would interest himself and take the necessary steps for his release. Unfortunately, D'Ormeville knew nobody, and he would probably have served the whole of his term in prison, if chance had not sent him a powerful protector in the person of the colonel. The latter occupied himself immediately in obtaining D'Ormeville's liberty, on the ground that the offence was not of so grave a nature as to merit such rigor, and that he had suffered enough by his exile of twenty years. The steps which the colonel was obliged to take consumed more time than he had believed possible. He had already been accorded permission to see D'Ormeville, but he would not present himself to the latter until he could carry his pardon.

What generous conduct towards a man who had been his rival, who had deprived him of the love of the woman whom he adored, and who was now going to take from him the one whom he regarded as his son! There exist few men like the colonel.

At last, after three months passed in inquiries and solicitations, Colonel Framberg obtained the liberty of Henri's father. What a moment for his generous soul! With what delight he went to the prison; the feeling that one has done a good action so amply repays one for all the trouble he has taken. D'Ormeville no longer expected his pardon. The unhappy man, seated in a corner of his prison, was thinking of his Pauline; the grief which he knew she would feel augmented the sadness of his situation. Suddenly, the door of his cell opened, a man whom he did not know, but whose face bespoke his goodness, presented himself before him — the reader may well believe that this was the colonel. He threw himself into D'Ormeville's arms, and the latter, astonished, did not know what to think of this.

"Let us embrace first," said the colonel, "we can make acquaintance afterwards. Meanwhile, here is the order for your release. I am Colonel Framberg, and I have obtained it for you."

D'Ormeville did not know whether he were fully awake. The name of the colonel, the word liberty, almost stunned him, but the colonel, in

consideration for his surprise, led him out of the prison, made him get into a coach, and conducted him to the hotel where he was staying.

"It is not a dream, then?" said D'Ormeville. "I am at liberty, and I owe it to you, Colonel."

"I can conceive your astonishment, my dear D'Ormeville, and I am going to explain matters to you, but, as the story I have to tell you is rather long, we will wait until we get to my hotel, where we can talk without being interrupted."

D'Ormeville consented to this, and on their arrival at the hotel the colonel ordered that no one should interrupt them, and related to D'Ormeville the events which we already know. How can we depict D'Ormeville's astonishment on learning that his son lived, and that he should soon see him. His joy was almost delirious. He threw himself into the colonel's arms, and called him his tutelary genius. Suddenly, he paused, and reflected deeply.

"What is the matter with you?" said the colonel. "What is the cause of your bewilderment?"

"Have you another son?" said D'Ormeville to him.

"No, I have none but Henri, who has taken the place of one to me."

"Henri! There is no further doubt of it, it is he!"

"What do you mean?"

"I know this beloved son, and Heaven chose him to save my life."

"Can it be? Henri has saved your life!"

"In a forest about six leagues distant from Strasburg I was about to fall a victim to two assassins, when Providence sent my son to save my life."

D'Ormeville was, in fact, he whom Henri had saved. Colonel Framberg was lost in admiration of the decrees of Providence, which had sent the son to succor the father. Then he continued his recital, which D'Ormeville had interrupted by his exclamation. When the latter learned of the unfortunate love of Pauline and Henri, and the grief which the colonel experienced because of this fatal passion, D'Ormeville interrupted him, saying, —

"Dry your tears, my friend, our children shall be restored to happiness and to love. Pauline is not my daughter."

"She is not your daughter!" cried the colonel, intoxicated with joy, "it is almost too good to believe. These dear children have had so much sorrow that I dare not yet believe in this happiness."

"It is the truth, but I confess it needs to be explained. Listen to me, and I will in my turn tell you all the events which have occurred since the moment when I separated from her whom I had called my wife."

History of D'Ormeville

"On leaving my dear Clémentine, I went to Vienna, there to offer my services to the emperor. War had been declared between Russia and Austria, and I had little trouble in getting myself accepted, and, in consideration of my volunteering, and of my birth, I was soon lieutenant in a regiment of hussars which was about to start on a campaign. I left with my company, and we encountered the enemy near a village between Novogrodek and Wilna. The battle was a bloody one, and the Russians were defeated, as I learned afterward. Having received a bullet wound at the commencement of action, I fell from my horse and was left as dead on the field of battle.

"A peasant who passed by me, long after the two armies had departed, perceived that I still breathed. He had the humanity to take me on his shoulder and carry me to his cottage, and there gave me every care to bring me back to life. I remained nearly a year with this good countryman, for it was not until that time that my wound was sufficiently healed to allow me to think of rejoining my flag. During my long illness, the chances of war had made the Russians masters of the village where I was stopping. They had established posts in all the places through which I would have had to pass in order to return to Austria, and I saw that I could not leave without exposing myself to almost inevitable danger.

"What could I do! My situation was frightful. I possessed but a small sum of money, and I did not wish to be any longer a charge to the brave man who had saved my life. There was but one course for me to take, and that was to work for a living, and I decided promptly to do this. The good peasant who had succored me found me some work at a farmer's in the neighborhood. I assumed the costume which suited my new state, and I put myself to work on that earth which is never ungrateful towards those who water it with their sweat. I lived peacefully enough for a long time, and became accustomed to my new existence; besides my remembrance of my Clémentine, and the hope of seeing her again enabled me to bear with courage my long exile. You know that on coming into Germany I dropped the name of D'Ormeville to take that of Christiern, and I was also known by this name in my new neighborhood.

"About half a league from the farm where I dwelt was a little castle belonging to a man by the name of Droglouski. This Droglouski was not liked in the neighborhood, and reports were circulated in regard to him to which I paid little attention. His castle was on an elevation from whence one could see all the surrounding country, and when my work permitted me I directed my steps towards it, and turning my eyes towards the place where my dear Clémentine dwelt, I

prayed heaven that it would soon permit me to see her whom I adored.

"I had noticed in my solitary walks a man whom I often met on the way, and who appeared to examine me attentively. I did not at first pay any great attention to him; however, impatient at always seeing this man on my walks, I asked the farmer if he knew him. From the portrait which I drew of him, he told me that it would be M. Droglouski's servant and confidant, and that he even recalled the fact that this man had come to the town and had put divers questions to the villagers in regard to me and my circumstances. Curious to know what he could possibly want of me, I resolved to speak to him the first time that I should meet him. The occasion was not very long in presenting itself. A few days only had passed, when, being one evening in the neighborhood of the castle, I saw my man about two steps from me. I at once approached him and informed him that I was very much at a loss to account for my meeting him so incessantly on my path, and that I begged he would explain to me the reason.

"'You shall know it,' he answered me in a gloomy voice, 'but as what I have to say to you is exceedingly important, will you consent to come this evening at midnight to this place. We need not fear being surprised, and I will tell you something that will interest you.'

"'Why not tell me now,' said I, surprised at the tone in which he spoke to me.

"'No,' said he, 'at midnight you shall know all, but do not fail to come here then, your life depends upon it!'

"Saying these words he departed, and left me in an astonishment which I cannot depict. 'Shall I be discovered?' I said to myself when alone, 'Ought I to go to this rendezvous?' I waited for a long time, and, finally, reflecting that he had told me that my life depended upon it, I presumed that he would not give me up unless I failed to keep my word, and I resolved to be punctual to the appointed hour. At midnight I was at the specified place, at a hundred paces from the castle, and soon saw my man coming towards me. He led me to a bank at the foot of a tree, and spoke to me as follows,—

"'You are an Austrian, and, in consequence, at war with the Russians. You have not a sou, and you are only awaiting a favorable occasion to return to your country. If you should be recognized you would be put to death immediately. I can give you up to your enemies and cause you to be led to the scaffold, and I will do this unless you consent to all that I am about to propose to you.'

"I saw that I had to do with a scoundrel, but my life was in his hands and it was necessary to dissimulate.

"'What do you require of me?' I said to him.

"'This,' he answered me, 'there lives in this castle, which you see before us, a child of three or four years, whose existence annoys several persons. We could have put it to death ourselves, but I have fixed upon you to do it, because this murder, if committed in the castle, would, perhaps, give rise to suspicion.'

"I shuddered with horror at this speech, but I hid my indignation and the scoundrel continued,—

"'It is unnecessary that you should know the motives of this vengeance. I forbid you to ever seek to learn them, for this curiosity would cost you your life, and if, in future years, you should be tempted to return to this country, for I presume you will go back to Austria as soon as peace is made, I forewarn you that your inquiries will be useless, for this castle will be abandoned, and you will find nobody here. It is for you to decide, and if you are willing to do what I wish you shall be generously recompensed. If you refuse, on the contrary, I will go and denounce you to the Russians, who occupy this country, and you cannot escape death.'

"'It needs no consideration,' said I to him, 'I accept.'

"'That's good enough. In that case, follow me, and I will give you the child.'

"'What! Immediately?'

"'Undoubtedly, the sooner the better.'

"I tremblingly followed the scoundrel who judged me capable of consenting to his odious project. He led me into the interior of the castle; a profound, a deep silence reigned there. Arriving in a lower room, he left me, telling me to await his return. I remained alone for some minutes, listening attentively that I might hear something that would disclose the mystery, but the profound and extraordinary silence made me judge that the man who had introduced me lived there alone, and I confess that then I formed the plan of delivering the earth of this monster, and of saving his innocent victim. But I was mistaken in my hope. My man returned, holding a child in his arms, and followed by another personage, who was masked, and who looked at me without speaking.

"'Wait, here is the child, and a purse full of gold,' said my first interviewer, 'you know what you have to do. Go! Leave this castle, and reflect well that if you do not execute our orders, death will follow on your treason.'

"I did not answer. I took the child and the purse, and my man accompanied me as far as the castle gate; there, having repeated his threats, he left me, and I found myself alone with the child. 'Poor little thing,' said I, examining her, for I saw it was a little girl — she could not be more than four years old — 'should I lose my life, I

will save you from the fury of your enemies.' My course was soon taken. If I remained in the village, I might expect to be arrested; I, therefore, resolved to seek another shelter. In truth, I might also be taken when fleeing, but I thought that Heaven would protect my actions, and that hope gave me courage. I journeyed several leagues without any danger, and then I came at last to an immense forest, where I thought I should do well to remain hidden for some time. The poor child whom Heaven had confided to me was the object of my tenderest solicitude. Alas, deprived of everything, I was obliged each evening to make her a cradle with branches from the trees. In the morning, before she had awakened, I went tremblingly to a peasant's cottage, and there bought the provisions necessary for our existence. By her innocent caresses the little one made me forget my misfortune. She called me her father, and I resolved to stand in his place. I named her Pauline, and I hoped that with the French name she would also possess the gayety and the grace of the women of my country. Finally, I received the recompense that always follows a good action. A fortnight had barely passed when I learned that the Austrians were advancing at a forced march towards the place where I had taken refuge. The Russians fled before their conquerors, and I soon saw myself in the midst of my comrades. I resumed the rank which I had occupied in the army,

but the care of my little Pauline embarrassed me greatly. By chance, I made the acquaintance of the respectable Madame Reinstard, who had followed her son, who was in the army. He had been killed, and she had fallen into a state of the deepest despair. I proposed to her that she should act as Pauline's mother, telling her that she was my daughter. She consented joyfully to do so, and started for Offenburg to settle herself in the neighborhood. I expected to go there to join her in a short time, and I hoped, also, that I should see Clémentine, but, alas, an officer who had passed by the Castle von Framberg informed me that she, believing me dead, like everyone else, had married Colonel Framberg, that she had borne a son, and that she had died after several years of marriage. This news defeated my plans for happiness. Nothing remained to me but the hope of rejoining my Clémentine. Several battles followed, and I sought death in the ranks of the enemy, but destiny was deaf to my wishes and I found nothing but glory. I became captain, and time and the remembrance of my little Pauline assuaged my despair. I made my winter quarters with her who believed me to be her father, and I took care that she should not learn anything to the contrary, that I might keep from her sorrows which could only have cast a gloomy tint over the beautiful days of her youth.

"I was as happy as it was possible for me to be,

I looked upon Pauline as my daughter, and the idea never came to me that my child and Clémentine's could be this Henri von Framberg whom everybody called your son. The desire of seeing my country came at last to disturb my tranquillity. You know the rest, Colonel, and I can never sufficiently express all the gratitude I owe you."

Who can depict the colonel's joy on learning that Pauline was not Henri's sister?

"They are then free to love," said he to D'Ormeville; "for I do not doubt that you will approve their union."

"Oh, Colonel," answered the latter, "You cannot believe that I find my son only to make him unhappy. Besides you have still the rights of a father over him, since you have held the place of one for so long a time. You shall keep them, and I shall regard Henri as unworthy of my love if he has not always the same affection for you."

The two friends shook hands cordially, vowing reciprocally to have towards Henri and Pauline a father's tenderness.

"But, by the way," said the colonel, "have you never taken any steps to discover who were the parents of this poor little girl, and learn the cause of the hatred of those monsters who wished her death?"

"I confess to you that I have never sought to discover them. Besides I thought I should be taking useless trouble to try to do so. It would

be necessary to return to a country where I knew no one, to look there for people who certainly would not await my return to flee from a place they had so much reason to abandon as they told me. Later, I reflected on the situation of my dear Pauline; she was happy, peaceful with me, and I should, perhaps, disturb her tranquillity and reawaken the hatred of her enemies against her, by seeking to make her known to her parents, who evidently interested themselves little about her since they had never taken any steps to recover her."

"You are right as to the first point, my dear D'Ormeville; but, as to the second, I am not of your opinion, for now that Pauline has protectors in ourselves, friends who know how to guard her against the snares of these vile enemies, what can you fear for her if we seek to discover her birth in order to make them restore her fortune? For she should have one, I don't doubt my friend; it is always gold that causes men to commit the greatest crimes."

"I think with you, but what can we do? What means can we employ?"

"We will reflect on it. I remember — yes, perhaps those for whom we are searching are not unknown to me."

"What do you say?"

"You remember your adventure in the forest near Strasburg, when Henri saved your life?"

"I shall never forget it!"

"Have you not reflected that these two men, who were not ordinary murderers, might be the envoys of those from whom you received the child, and who wish to punish you for disobeying their orders?"

"I thought so at the moment; but how could I suppose that I should meet in France, and near my residence, those people who had so much cause to flee from me?"

"Certainly they would not have sought you; but if they met you here they believed it necessary for their safety to sacrifice you. Remember, they thought you an Austrian by birth, and that their not thinking to find you in France was a reason for their taking up their abode here."

"You open my eyes, Colonel, and I have no doubt now that the scoundrels who wished to take my life are the same who had sworn death to my dear Pauline."

"Learn then, how I hope to discover them. Henri, in listening to the conversation of these two wretches, had had time to examine their faces; judge of his surprise when, on coming to the little house where I had been hospitably entertained, situated in the midst of the forest, he recognized in the master of the dwelling that one of the assassins who escaped his just punishment by flying at Henri's approach."

"Can it be possible? And this man?"

"He could not recognize Henri, for he had not had time to look at him; but he was suspicious of him, because when we left the next day he had already quitted the house."

"I don't doubt but that Henri can tell us what we are so interested in knowing; but where can we find him now?"

"We shall do so later, I don't doubt. In the first moment, when Henri told me, I refused to punish a man to whom I owed hospitality, but now I know all his villany I will discover him if I follow him to the ends of the earth."

"I will second you, Colonel, and we shall yet unmask the villains."

The two friends agreed on this point, that it was urgent that they should rejoin their children; and the colonel, who had learned that Mullern and Henri were at the castle, first wrote a letter to the former in which he detailed all that had happened to him. He charged him to share with his children the pleasure of such happy tidings, that they might be the sooner reunited. He invited Mullern to come with Henri and Pauline to meet them. This letter despatched, the colonel and his friend made every preparation for their departure, and were soon on the way to the Castle von Framberg.

Leaving them to travel we will return to the castle. When Pauline had read the colonel's letter, she shared Mullern's transports of joy;

and her emotion was so great that she thought it would be fatal to her, and again lost consciousness.

"Come, triple musket shot!" said Mullern, turning everything upside-down, "this is what I've done with my devilish stupid head, thinking to give her much pleasure, I've sent her into the other world without a passport."

However, despite Mullern's fears, Pauline regained consciousness and found herself better than ever.

"Thousand bombs!" said our hussar, "don't begin any more faintings or I shall end by losing my wits over it."

Pauline wished to dress at once and go to meet her benefactors.

"One moment," said Mullern, "I have no desire that you should be ill on the road, and as that would surely happen we won't start until the day after tomorrow, because you are too weak to travel."

Despite all that Pauline could say as to her health, Mullern was inexorable.

"I am sorrier than you are," said he, "for I burn to see my colonel, but experience has made me wise, we must be patient."

Her first transport of joy past, Pauline sighed and looked sadly to heaven; on his part, Mullern became pensive and put his cuff to his eye, as was his habit when anything affected him; after half

an hour spent in profound silence they looked at each other.

"I divine all you wish to say to me," said Mullern to Pauline, "you had forgotten it in the first moment of our joy; but that could not last."

"Alas! Where is he now?"

"He is weeping in some corner like a penitent! Oh, if he had only had the courage to stand firm and await events, he would not have put us in our present embarrassment; for how shall we appear without him before those who are awaiting us? What will the colonel say?"

"What will his father say, who is hoping soon to embrace him?"

"What shall we say, if they demand the cause of his flight. Thousand squadrons! I believe that I dread seeing my colonel, although I was impatient a moment ago to go and throw myself on his breast."

Finally, Mullern reflected that, aided by the colonel and D'Ormeville, he should easily discover Henri, and that when he had found him he should be perfectly happy. Quieted by these reflections, he busied himself in consoling Pauline, and did so without trouble, for she was only too pleased to believe as he did.

The two days passed and Franck, whom Mullern had charged with the preparations for departure, came to tell him that the post-chaise was waiting.

"Come, let us start!" said Mullern, and he sent to look for Pauline. Meanwhile, our hussar prepared a speech for the colonel, for he dreaded the first moment of the interview, and went to the castle gate, looked out over the country and said to himself,—

"Where is he now, the demon? What is he doing now. Ah! if he knew his happiness. But, no, he likes better to run about the country and make me swear, than to return to me. This pupil of mine has given me a good deal of trouble."

Pauline was not long in coming down; she glanced sadly at the castle, where, in so short a time, so much had happened to her. Mullern made her get into the carriage, saying to her,—

"I have a secret presentiment that we shall soon return here happier than we are in leaving."

"May your presentiment prove true," answered Pauline, sighing.

Mullern placed himself beside her, Franck mounted as postilion, and they departed from the castle.

The post-chaise only stopped once to change horses until they reached Blamont; there our travellers alighted at the post inn, with the design of passing the night there. The inn was filled with travellers, and the inn people were running from one side to the other, not knowing whom to answer first. Mullern had some little trouble in getting to the innkeeper; at last he met him.

"Monsieur Host," said Mullern, "give us some rooms with beds and supper as quickly as you can."

"Mons-monsieur Hus-hus-hussar, I will do—I will do so with much-much—with much pleasure, but it's-it's-it's because."

"Well, it's because what? Try to speak more clearly."

"I-I-I-have only one room, very-very pretty, with a bed."

"Come, this is the devil!" said Mullern, "How shall we manage?"

However, Pauline was too greatly fatigued to go farther; Mullern engaged the room that was left, hoping that he and Franck could find some place to sleep, if it were only a hayloft.

He signed to the innkeeper to conduct them to the chamber in question, for he wished to prevent the man from stuttering, which made him impatient.

Pauline was conducted to a pretty room which looked on the street; and, as she would take nothing, Mullern wished her good-night, warning her that he would come for her the next morning when he was ready to start.

Mullern and Franck, who had no desire to go to bed without supper, asked the innkeeper where they could be served most promptly.

"If-if-if these gentlemen would come to the-the-the—to the-the—"

"Thousand bombs, why don't you make an end of it?"

"To the ta-ta-ta —"

"To the devil with the cursed stammerer with his ta-ta, his if-if and his the-the; I believe he'll amuse himself next by solfa-ing the psalms of David."

"Monsieur, the more impatient you are with him the worse he talks," said Franck.

"That's very agreeable! In that case take the explanation on yourself, for he incites me to deal him a few blows with the flat of my sabre to loosen his tongue."

Franck was more adroit than Mullern, for the innkeeper led them to the table d'hôte, where they were having supper.

"Come, we'll go to the table d'hôte," said Mullern, "afterwards we'll see about our beds."

The room where they supped was occupied by many people; however, as they entered, Mullern observed a man who left the table hastily, putting his handkerchief to his face; our hussar did not pay any great attention to him, and went to take the place at the table which the traveller had left.

Mullern and Franck had been supping quietly for some minutes, troubling themselves very little about the other travellers, who were chatting together, when two men dressed like wagoners came into the room, and seated themselves opposite Mullern and his companion. Conversation soon

started between them and these new comers; they appeared to be jolly fellows, drinking hard and talking a great deal. They drew Mullern out about his battles, and when the latter once began to talk it was not long before he grew heated, and believed himself still in action. The two travellers appeared to have much pleasure in listening to him, and incited him to continue; while talking, they drank, and the conversation was prolonged until such a late hour that perhaps Mullern would have passed the night under the table if he had not seen that Franck was already snoring at his side.

"We must go to bed," said Mullern rising from the table.

He walked a little unsteadily, but was still able to support himself; the two travellers called the innkeeper, and he took a good deal of trouble to find a room for Mullern and his companion. Our hussar thanked them, slapping them amicably on the shoulder, and swearing that they were good fellows. Thanks to the attention of the two travellers, Mullern and Franck had a little room, under the roof, it is true, but they would have slept on the roof had it been necessary. Some one led them to their room, and they were soon snoring in unison.

Ten o'clock was striking when Mullern awoke the next day.

"Hang it!" said he, "this is fine conduct, but

now I remember that yesterday evening there were two devils of men who made us drink like templars. Come, thousand bombs! We must make up for lost time."

So saying, Mullern aroused Franck, who was still sleeping, and they dressed hastily.

"I am certain," said Mullern, "that Mademoiselle Pauline has been waiting for us for more than two hours, and we must try not to tax her patience still further."

He ran downstairs as fast as possible, and went to that part of the inn where Pauline had slept. He rapped several times at the door but received no answer.

"She is tired of waiting, and has no doubt gone to walk in the garden," said Mullern to himself; and he went quickly down the staircase, and crossed the yard to go into the garden. On the way he met the innkeeper, who stopped him.

"Where-where are you go-go-going, monsieur?"

"Hang it! I am going to look for the young lady who slept in the main building, and who is not in her room; she is probably in the garden."

"Not at-not at- not at all. Monsieur knows that she-she is gone."

"What gone? No, triple thunder! I don't believe it, and it cannot be. When did she go? How? With whom?"

"Just-just-just now."

"Is it possible?"

"With a man, who-who-who —"

"Go to the devil with your who-who-whos," said Mullern, transported with anger, and he rudely pushed the host who fell on the back of a big dog lying in the yard, which, frightened by this unforeseen attack, bit the innkeeper on the leg. Mullern, not doubting that there was something extraordinary in all this, took the course of running after Pauline.

"Which way did she go?" asked he of a young servant who was seated before the door.

"On the road to Lunéville, monsieur."

Immediately our hussar jumped on the first horse he came to, and dashed down the road to Lunéville.

"She has only just left, they assured me," said Mullern galloping, "so she can't have got very far yet. I should have waited for Franck to come with me, but that devil of a man made me so impatient."

As Mullern finished his reflections he seemed to hear shouts at some distance. He turned towards the locality from which they came, and saw a post-chaise standing in the road.

"Let's see," said Mullern, "if it be the one I am looking for." Immediately he put his horse at full speed, and saw a woman who was about to throw herself out of the carriage, but was prevented by a man.

"That woman is Pauline," said Mullern; the sound of two swords clashing caused him to turn his head, and he saw two men who were fighting furiously.

"Good," said he, "one of the two is Pauline's defender."

But our hussar, embarrassed, did not know to which side to turn his steps. Finally, he thought that he must first save the man who was exposing his life to protect Pauline. He ran towards the combatants, but, oh, new surprise, one of them was M. de Monterranville, whom Mullern had so greatly wished to kill; and the other — unhoped for happiness — was his dear Henri, for whom they had mourned so long.

By what chance he found himself there, and so fortunately at just the right moment to prevent his Pauline from being abducted by a scoundrel who desired her ruin, is what we shall tell the reader in the following chapter. But for that it will be necessary to return for a moment to our hero, as he departed so suddenly from the castle.

CHAPTER XV

Short and Sad. A Happy Meeting

It is necessary to recall to the reader's memory the fact that Henri left Castle Framberg in the middle of the night on which his interview with Pauline had taken place in the clump of shrubbery, and that he was then in a state of bewilderment and despair which did not allow him to reflect where he was going, nor to care what might become of him. The remembrance of the fault, nay, crime, he had committed disturbed his reason and depressed his soul.

"O my God," said he, "you who have given me a heart capable of loving so passionately and a soul too feeble to master a love which, though honorable and innocent at its inception, circumstances have rendered it criminal to cherish, deprive me of life or erase from my mind the image of her who is at once my torture and my happiness, and whom my folly has perhaps led to the tomb."

Having walked all day across the fields, Henri, incapable longer of resisting his fatigue, stopped at the cottage of a woodman; he was then in the middle of the Black Forest, a short distance from

Freudenstadt. Poor Henri, who was just recovering from illness, was not in a state to withstand a great sorrow, and hardly was he in the good peasant's house when he fell ill a second time. However, on entering the house Henri had forbidden his host to say that he was lodging a traveller, and the former had religiously guarded his secret. This was why Mullern, in his frequent excursions, had not discovered Henri at the woodman's.

The good hussar hardly imagined that his dear pupil was so near him ; that a burning fever consumed him, and that, prostrated by grief and suffering, he had no one to solace him but a wretched woodman who himself lacked everything. Mullern would have flown to him that he might watch him day and night, but destiny had ordered otherwise.

At the end of six weeks Henri was able to leave the Black Forest. He said good-by to his host, and left, without knowing whither he should go ; wishing, however, to place some distance between himself and the castle, he took the road to France and stopped some time at Strasburg. He went to lodge in the house where he had found his dear Pauline for the second time, and in which he had passed the happiest moments of his life, near her whom he then called his wife. After remaining there for two months, our young man resolved, in order to distract himself, to go to Paris. His

design was also to make further researches in that city for his father, whom he ardently longed to see and to know. He was ignorant of the fact that his generous benefactor had charged himself with that care and had been successful.

Chance willed it that Henri should stop at Blamont, in the same inn as Mullern and his companions. It was he who was seated at the host's table when they entered. Henri recognized Mullern immediately, but not wishing to be seen by him he hastily left, putting his handkerchief before his face. When he had reached his chamber he thought that perhaps Pauline had accompanied Mullern, and unable to resist his curiosity he went down to question the servant of the inn, who told him that a young lady, whom she depicted to him, had arrived, and that she was sleeping in a room on the first floor. When Henri was sure that Pauline, Mullern and Franck were travelling together he sought to divine the motive of their journey, and could find no other except that they were still in pursuit of him. Firmly resolving not to show himself, he went up to his chamber, reflecting on this meeting, but the idea that his Pauline was resting under the same roof as himself would not permit him to take a moment's rest.

The next morning Henri rose at the break of day; unable to resist the desire to see Pauline for a moment, he placed himself before the door

of the inn, and impatiently awaited the moment of her leaving. After waiting for a long time he began to lose courage and was about to leave the place when the woman he so ardently desired to see passed before him; but Mullern and Franck were not with her. One man only, a man whom Henri did not know, appeared with her. Astonished at what he saw, our hero followed them at a safe distance; arrived at the edge of a wood two men darted out on Pauline and bore her to a post-chaise which was near them. In vain Pauline struggled and called for help; they put her in a carriage, and the man who had brought her to the rendezvous mounted as postilion, whipped up his horses, and they rapidly departed.

Henri had run to Pauline's assistance, but he was at too great a distance to hope to be able to take her away from her adversary; however, fury lent him wings, he ran so swiftly that he caught up with the carriage, then he shouted to the postilion to stop; the latter did not listen to him and continuing to go on as fast as before, Henri employed the only means which remained to him in order to save his darling. He aimed one of his pistols at the postilion, who fell dead on the highway; immediately the carriage stopped, a man alighted like a madman and ran at Henri, sword in hand. Henri recognized him at once; it was M. de Monterranville, it was the assassin of the forest.

"Come, wretch," said Henri to him, "come, and receive the punishment of all your crimes."

He awaited his adversary with a firm foot, and they attacked each other with equal fury. At this moment our hussar appeared at the place of the combat.

"O you gallows bird," said Mullern, running towards the combatants, "to fight with my pupil. Wait, we shall soon see if our sabres are sharp."

But Mullern arrived too late to have the pleasure of using his sabre, for, as he was speaking, Henri gave M. de Monterranville a stroke of the sword which extended him at our hussar's feet.

"Bravo! Bravo! my dearest Henri," said Mullern, falling on his pupil's neck, "this renders you worthy of me, for the scoundrel there fought furiously. But I see another of them who is still seeking to escape, and I'll make that my affair."

Saying these words, Mullern galloped towards the man who had guarded Pauline during the combat, and who had taken flight as soon as he saw his master lying on the ground. As he was greatly in advance of Mullern he was about to escape, when our hussar perceived in the distance a post-chaise which was coming in the direction in which his man was escaping.

"Bar the way! Stop that rascal there," shouted Mullern. Whether they heard him, or whether they divined what was wanted, the carriage stopped. Two men alighted to stop the villain

whom they seized, Mullern advanced to thank the travellers, and was greatly delighted at recognizing Colonel von Framberg and his friend. The colonel and D'Ormeville, surprised at this meeting, asked him a thousand questions.

"Come," said Mullern, "follow me, you shall see them, you will learn something fine about that rascal, De Monterranville, but we must not let this fellow escape; we shall learn from him all the details of this abduction."

The two friends understood nothing of all this, but nevertheless followed Mullern, who led them to the scene of the fight, where Henri was engaged in calming his dear Pauline's fear. Poor Henri was at the height of his joy, for as she threw herself into his arms she had said, "You are not my brother — wait here is your father," she added, recognizing D'Ormeville.

"Can it be? Great God! is it you?" and Henri was already in his father's embrace. Joy carried them to the borders of delirium.

The colonel, Henri, D'Ormeville, Pauline, and Mullern threw themselves into each others' arms. They were reunited; the two young people could love without crime, after so much grief, so many reverses; their hearts, so long oppressed, could hardly support this excess of happiness, and tears of tenderness bathed their eyelids.

"Thousand million cartridges, we are victors!" said Mullern, throwing his shako into the air,

"but not without trouble, for it has taken us a long while to carry the place."

When their first transports became a little calm, the travellers began to think of leaving the neighborhood and continuing their way to the Castle von Framberg, but a groan which they heard made them turn their heads; they perceived that M. de Monterranville still lived, and was calling them to come to his aid.

"We must not abandon this man," said the colonel, "his confession will be of great service to us, as we shall finally learn what was the origin of our dear Pauline."

Everybody approved of what the colonel said, and they went towards the wounded man.

"I feel," said he, "that I have only a few moments to live; but as my declaration will establish the fortune of this young woman whom I have persecuted, take me to the nearest place, and there, before a lawyer, I will tell you, if I have the strength, the story of my unfortunate existence."

They hastened to fulfill the desires of the dying man. Mullern and Franck made a litter, on which he was placed. The postilion, who was dead, was left on the place until such time as the magistrate should come to the spot. They took with them the other accomplice of the wounded man, and resumed their way to Blamont, which the travellers had not left. On arriving at the inn the

colonel sent in search of a doctor, a lawyer and witnesses. The doctor, on examining M. de Monterranville's wound, announced that he had but a few moments to live, and that if they had need of his declaration, it was necessary to profit by them. Everybody immediately gathered in the sick man's room, who made with great difficulty the following recital, —

History of M. de Monterranville.

"Now that death hovers over my head, and my being is about to suffer dissolution, I shudder in retracing all the crimes which jealousy and cupidity have caused me to commit; the bandage has fallen from my eyes, remorse tears my soul, and I cannot longer deceive myself.

"Ah, how terrible are the last moments of a criminal! He is devoid of all consolation — the world which he leaves looks upon him only with horror, and the remembrance of a good action is lacking to alleviate his torture.

"O you whom I have persecuted from infancy, interesting woman, how you will blush to recognize an uncle in the wretch before you!"

"My uncle!" cried Pauline, in surprise.

"Her uncle?" said all those present. The wounded man made a sign to them to listen, and continued in these words, —

"My true name is Droglouski; I was born at Smolensko; my father, the palatine, was im-

mensely rich and had only two children, myself and a sister two years younger.

"From my earliest infancy I bore the most violent hatred to my sister, because I foresaw that she would share with me our father's rich heritage, which cupidity led me to desire to possess entirely.

"Unfortunately I took into my service a man named Stoffar, who was the vilest scoundrel on the earth, Perceiving my hatred for my sister, he flattered my passions, knowing that by this means he could win my confidence and soon become my intimate confidant.

"Belliska, my sister, was each day the subject of my jealousy and wickedness. She suffered without complaining all the ills which I inflicted upon her. But whether my father was informed of it, or whether he divined my odious character, he bequeathed me only a third of his fortune, gave the rest to my sister and ordered me to leave the country where he lived. I departed, with rage in my heart and swearing to be revenged, and I went with Stoffar to a little isolated castle which I bought, near Wilna, where I retired in order that I might be free to meditate on the manner in which I could ruin her whom I detested. I had been nearly a year in that situation when I was apprised of my father's death. This news, instead of softening me only increased my hatred of Belliska, and confirmed me in my design of bring-

ing about her ruin. She had become one of the richest heiresses in Russia, and her fortune was the object of all my hopes, for I had already almost entirely dissipated the property I had received. While I was deliberating with Stoffar as to the course I wished to take, my sister was married to a young Russian officer whom she loved. This event redoubled my despair.

"'We have delayed too long, monsieur,' said Stoffar to me, 'you must move, and you must follow my advice. Go first to see your sister, pretend you have forgotten the differences between you and exhibit towards her the most tender friendship.' I followed his counsel without learning his plan. My sister, always good, received me with open arms, and presented me to her husband, who accorded me a flattering welcome. They invited me to spend some months with them and I consented to do so.

"Shortly, however, all our plans were still further crossed by the birth of a daughter to the young couple, whom they named Eliska. That was you, unhappy Pauline, and as soon as you entered the world I vowed toward you a most implacable hatred.

"Chance, which favored my plans, caused the Count Beniouski, your father, to be called on to put himself at the head of his regiment, which was about to fight against the Swedes. My sister separated from her husband, shedding bitter tears;

the latter begged me not to leave her during his absence, and to act as her protector. I promised him; alas, he did not know the monster to whom he had confided her. Misfortune still pursued Belliska, her husband was killed in his first battle; this news overwhelmed me with joy, for I saw myself relieved of one obstacle to my fortune. I was tired of feigning for my sister a friendship which my heart was far from feeling. I wished besides to enjoy her fortune, and Stoffar told me that it was time to move. I am now going to make you shudder with horror, but I cannot longer defer the confession of an abominable crime. Learn, then, that a poisoned draught disembarrassed me forever of her whom I hated. You shudder, hear me to the end. In order to avoid all suspicion, I was careful to choose a slow poison for my victim; she lingered for six months before dying. During this time I redoubled my attentions to her in order to gain her confidence.

"My sister, feeling her end approach, was persuaded that it was grief which she felt at the death of her husband that was leading her to the tomb. She saw me about her and recommended her daughter to me; she appointed me the child's tutor, and died without suspecting that her brother was her murderer.

"There remained, then, only the little Eliska whose existence prevented me from inheriting my sister's wealth. I brought her to my isolated cas-

tle in order that I might there decide her fate. Stoffar counselled me to make away with her; but, by an excess of prudence which became fatal to me I wished that he should charge some unfortunate stranger, whose discretion we could not doubt, with the commission of this new crime.

"You will remember, sir," said Droglouski, addressing himself to D'Ormeville, "how Stoffar discovered you, and how he judged that you were the one who was necessary to us for the execution of our plans. We believed that you were in the service of Austria, we believed that you were an Austrian; my design being to settle in France, I was not apprehensive of meeting you again; besides you only saw me masked when we brought you the child.

"This affair ended we gave out that my niece was dead, and I inherited all the property of my sister; my most ardent desire was to leave the country which was the scene of all my crimes; I sold my properties and went to France with Stoffar. I bought near Strasburg the little house which you know, its isolated situation suited me, and I retired there from time to time when I was tired of the pleasures and debaucheries to which I gave myself up when in Paris with my worthy confidant. I have only to relate to you the events in which I have taken part.

"One day Stoffar recognized in Strasburg, in M. d'Ormeville, the one to whom we had confided

my sister's child. 'It is necessary that we should kill him,' he said to me immediately, 'for sooner or later I shall be met and recognized by this man and I shall be lost.' My soul shrunk from this new crime, but I feared Stoffar too much to resist him, and your death was resolved upon. Heaven, however, would not permit the accomplishment of this crime. You were saved by this young man whom you call your son, and Stoffar was killed. As for me I took refuge in my dwelling, pleased enough at being freed from my accomplice.

"Several months after this event you came, monsieur," said he to Henri, "to my house to seek Colonel Framberg; your disturbance, your emotion when you saw me, did not escape me; I did not doubt that you recognized me, and I listened to your conversation with this brave hussar in order to confirm my suspicions. Hardly had I heard you, when I lost my presence of mind, and fled in the middle of the night. When I had a little recovered from my fright I resolved to know what you would do, and if you would not seek to injure me; consequently, I disguised myself as a peasant and followed you and your friend Mullern in your journey. You went to the Castle von Framberg and I established myself in the neighborhood; I learned there of your love affair with her whom you believed your sister, and since I knew the father of that young person had borne

the name Christiern, that he came from Russia, and that he was an officer, I did not doubt that she was my niece. From there on, madame, you can divine the object of all my proceedings and I swore to have you in my power. Fearing greatly that if you recovered your protector he would bring me to ruin, for gold I induced two wretches to aid me in my plans, but it was not easy to abduct you from the castle. I was, however, on the point of going there when you started in a post-chaise with Mullern and Franck. I followed you closely; but it was not until we came to this inn that I found a means of effecting my design. My two confederates were to make your companions drink, that they might not spoil our affair.

"The next morning one of them knocked at your door; it was already late and you had awaited your companions for a long time. He told you that they had mended the post-chaise which had been a little damaged, and that they were awaiting you a few steps from here. You believed him and you allowed yourself to be led into the snare which I had laid for you, and which would have proved successful had not Heaven, weary of my crimes, sent your liberators."

Here M. de Monterranville, or rather Droglouski, terminated his recital, which had vividly agitated his audience. The lawyer had transcribed it word for word; the wounded man signed it and had a codicil added, stating that his niece was his

only heir, and that she would find in the cottage in the forest all that remained of the immense fortune, three-fourths of which he had not yet spent.

This business once terminated, our friends left a man, the sight of whom could only be painful to them, and especially to Pauline, to whom he was so nearly related. But hardly had they left him when they were informed that he was no more.

"A good riddance," said Mullern, "I hope that we shall not meet his like again." Pauline grieved a little for him, not that she could feel the least affection for him, but he was the only relation she had ever known.

Having nothing more to keep them at Blamont our friends took the road for the Castle von Framberg, where they arrived the next day. With what delight they returned to these places of which each had the most tender memories. The colonel and D'Ormeville united our two lovers, and marriage hid the faults of their love. Henri and Pauline at length became happy, and always remained with their benefactors and fathers. The good Mullern passed his life with them, getting tipsy sometimes, and swearing always; faults to be pardoned in one who possessed such fine qualities.

The Damsel of the Three Skirts

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CHAPTER I

Expounds the Danger of Sleeping Too Much and Tells How Dupont Amused Himself at the Ball

In the first place, my dear reader, you will no doubt consider the opening sentence of this chapter-head very paradoxical, so often have you heard the phrase repeated: "There is nothing so beneficial as sleep"; or, "Sleep is the best medicine"; or, "Sleep is the greatest restorative"; or, "Who sleeps, dines" (I apologize for citing this last axiom to you, for I am fully persuaded that you have never tested it). My only answer to this course of reasoning, were I inclined to argue the question, would be that the best things have their bad side; one should therefore be extremely careful never to abuse them.

But rather than enter into a lengthy argument, which might prove wearisome and so frustrate its object, I shall content myself with simply placing the figures before you, for you are well aware that there is nothing so convincing as figures, though it has often been argued that two and two do not always make four. First, then, I shall take the persons who go to bed at midnight; a great many

people, it is true, go to bed later than that, but as an infinite number retire earlier the balance is maintained. One goes to rest, then, at midnight, and one rises at eight o'clock in the morning; one has therefore slept during eight hours — the third of a day.

Consequently, should you live to be sixty, you will have given twenty years to slumber. Frankly now, do you not think that it is too much? Ah, I already hear you saying,—

"Why, monsieur, one doesn't sleep all night without awakening; I never have eight hours' sleep."

So be it; I am willing to admit it. Then, in place of twenty years' sleep I will credit you with fifteen; still, is not even that a good deal of time to lose?

"Sleep," says Montaigne, "stifles and suppresses the faculties of the mind."

You will say to me, "Rest is indispensable to man" (and to woman also; the ladies are so pleasing when they are asleep). That is correct; but in life, habit is everything; with four hours' sleep each day, or rather each night, you may be as healthy as Esculapius. I like to think that the god of medicine enjoyed good health, but I do not dare affirm it.

It would be well for you to acquire the habit of consecrating as little time as possible to this oblivion of existence; but, as you do exactly con-

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trary, it happens that the more you sleep the more you feel the need of sleep, which stupefies you, stagnates your blood, deprives you of a portion of your activity, and sometimes renders your intellect sluggish (when you have any, be it understood, but my readers must necessarily have some).

Sleep has still another drawback, it is conducive to obesity; and you, reader, like the rest of the world, are no doubt extremely averse to growing fat. It is a burden without a benefit. In general, nothing ages one so fast as an aldermanic expansion of front. Were you to seek for a man who desires a rotund amplitude of waistcoat I believe your search would be fruitless. Instead, you would find many who seek to repress their too-exuberant figures, some of them even having recourse to that feminine instrument of torture, the corset, at the risk of impeding the functions of their breathing apparatus; others go so far as to deprive themselves of the food which their appetite craves for fear of seeing their proportions increase.

Alexander the Great, or the great Alexander — no, I think it is much better to say Alexander the Great, the latter being unique, while the others are very numerous. Alexander the Great was often unwilling, even when he was lying down, to allow himself to be overcome by slumber, fearing that it would cause him to forget the plans and projects on which he was meditating. You will say to me perhaps,—

"Why did he lie down, then, if he did not wish to sleep?"

He lay down to rest, but not to sleep. As a last resort he caused to be placed on the ground beside his bed a vast copper basin; he stretched his arm out over this basin and in his hand held a large copper ball; if slumber overcame him, his fingers detached their hold on the ball and it naturally fell into the basin with a noise that immediately woke him up.

You have a perfect right to employ the same means as Alexander the Great when you do not wish to go to sleep; but you would probably find it tiresome to hold your arm over a basin with a great copper ball in your hand; I confess that it is necessary to be Alexander the Great or Alexandre Dumas to do such a thing as that.

There are other means of keeping one's self awake. One rarely goes to sleep when one is amusing one's self; it is therefore only a question of amusing one's self, but that is not always as easy.

A gentleman whom I shall call Dupont, if you will allow me to do so, and who lived in that pretty little town of Brives-la-Gaillarde, had an unfortunate habit of sleeping too much. He was married, it is true, but it did not appear that matrimony was sufficiently enlivening to him; there are people who would be capable of telling you that it would only have the effect of increasing his infirmity.

It is quite certain that Madame Dupont herself often said to her husband,—

"You sleep too much, monsieur; it is out of all reason. You are only forty now, what will you do when you are fifty? You go to sleep as soon as you put your head on the pillow, you don't wake up all night, and in the morning one can't get you to open your eyes. You're not a man, you're merely a dormouse. When I married I didn't expect to have a dormouse for my husband. But it doesn't concern me; this oversleeping will be fatal to you; you're becoming very stout and soon you'll have a stomach like a Punch."

M. Dupont was greatly concerned at his wife's speech; he had perhaps been rather indifferent about his resemblance to a dormouse, but he did not wish to have a stomach like that of the hump-backed hero of that popular domestic drama known as "Punch and Judy."

It did not take him long to decide; he immediately sought his doctor and said to him,—

"Doctor, I sleep a great deal too much; my wife complains of it, and I myself feel that it stupefies me. What can I do in order to sleep less?"

The doctor, who was extremely fond of smoking, shook his head and made a little cigarette as he answered,—

"Do you smoke?"

"Yes, doctor, I do nothing else; why, I go to sleep sometimes with my pipe in my mouth."

"That's a pity, because I should have advised you to take to smoking."

"Can't you recommend something else?"

"Do you take snuff?"

"Yes, doctor, I even have a collection of snuff boxes, but I'm not very fond of it."

"That's vexatious, because I should have advised you to take snuff."

"Is there nothing else, then?"

"Do you play cards?"

"I know all the games, but I'm not overfond of any of them; cards send me to sleep immediately."

"So much the worse; I should have advised you to play cards. For in order not to sleep too much you must amuse yourself. Have you ever been to Paris?"

"Yes, doctor, twice; but it's a long time ago and I was there on business. That was before my marriage. It occurs to me that I found plenty to amuse me in Paris."

"Well, then, visit Paris again; stay there for a time, that'll enliven you, wake you up, amuse you! But above all, go there alone; don't take your wife!"

Dupont strongly approved this last condition; he hastened to make his preparations, imparted the doctor's orders to his wife and started, leaving his better half apparently resigned to his absence; but then no one cares much about the society of

a dormouse, or at least of one who is next door to it.

It was then 1860 and carnival time, though unfortunately the carnival was very short that year; we say unfortunately, for I confess we are not of the opinion of those people who cry,—

"Masking is no longer in fashion, people no longer disguise themselves to go in a carriage or on foot to the boulevards; fie for shame! all that has gone by, departed, is in bad taste. Before long there will be no carnival."

In the first place we cannot conceive why odium should be cast upon that which tends to amuse and please the people. It certainly does not provoke the merriment of you gentlemen — who look as though you were always in an ill-temper and who have a nervous attack whenever you see other people enjoying themselves — and I am very sorry for you because of it; but when in former times, during Shrovetide, a triple row of carriages filled with maskers formed an immense Longchamps in the interior of Paris, I can assure you that the pedestrians, the passers, the idlers, did not grumble at having this free spectacle.

Not everybody has the means to go to the ball at the opera house, nor even to the Salle Barthelémy; and the man of modest income, walking out with his wife during Shrovetide, returned home delighted when he had been elbowed and jostled by some harlequins or punchinellos; and if a bear

had said to his wife, "I know you!" she would proudly say to her porter, as they went in,—

"There was a bear who said to me,—'I know you.'"

You see well, my pessimistic gentlemen, who are averse to the carnival, that in suppressing it you would cause disappointment to a good many people! I know that would make no difference to you; but the task is a difficult one, for as long as the world stands there will be masqueraders. There are some people who will tell you they are to be found all the year round, and that one need not wait for a carnival to see them. But as that has been very often repeated, I need not say any more to you about it.

The carnival is the time for intrigues and folly. We might tell you there were intrigues all the year round, but that has also been said, and we will not repeat it. We will take the liberty of pointing out to you, in passing, that we never say anything but what is new; this is very complaisant on our part, and we are persuaded that you will give us full credit for it.

M. Dupont was, as we have already told our readers, a man of forty years of age; a time of life when one's tastes and preferences are fully developed, and when one may reasonably indulge them; but up to this time that gentleman had not given the slightest indication that he possessed any marked preferences whatsoever. He smoked, he

took snuff, he played cards, he drank, but had no real taste for any of these things, and they afforded him little if any pleasure. As to women, you have seen that the presence of his wife did not deter him from sleeping the greater part of the time. Dupont, nevertheless, was not insensible to the charm of feminine beauty; that which attracted him, however, was height, form, and carriage; in fact, he preferred a fine figure to a pretty face, and unluckily for Madame Dupont, she was pretty rather than well made; perhaps this may account for her husband's abnormal sleepiness.

Dupont himself was neither handsome nor plain, neither large nor small, neither stupid nor clever; he was one of those people who provoke neither praise nor criticism. However, he was well built and possessed a pretty foot and small white hands. He was very vain of these advantages, believing himself an Apollo in diminuendo, and had a very decided objection to the increase of his girth. It was principally the fear of this that had decided him to go to Paris; and since his medical adviser had ordered him to leave his wife at home, it was very evident that the doctor wished him to lead a bachelor life during his stay in that city; but what is a bachelor life, if it be not to participate in intrigues, little flirtations, and even affairs of a more serious character; in short, to dance attendance on all the women, society ladies when opportunity allows it, and grisettes when one can do no better?

As to grisettes, there are some writers who would try to make one believe that there are none of them nowadays, that they have gone out of fashion, like pug dogs — that the mould is broken. With all due deference for these gentlemen, the grisette exists, and always will exist, in Paris. And what else, if you please, are the artificial flower-makers, the embroideresses, the burnishers, the decorators, the laundrywomen, the vest-makers, the shirt-makers, the trouser-makers, etc.? They are neither great coquettes, nor those very free and easy beauties who display themselves in the stage boxes of the little theatres, and who are called, I know not why, "lorettes"; neither are they demi-monde, for very often their lovers have nothing to offer them except love; finally, they are not the daughters of good bourgeoisie, who go out only on their father's or their brother's arms; they are grisettes — the real grisettes. Don't let us try to change it; it is such pretty money, why should anyone wish it to be no longer in currency?

You, gentlemen, who declare that there are none to be found in Paris, go once or twice during the summer to the Closerie des Lilas, that ball favored of students who are still fond of dancing and sweethearting; you will there see grisettes of all kinds, you will see them skipping, laughing and fooling, dancing a can-can as gracefully as possible, and displaying their ankles far less than is done in the Spanish dances which are allowed in the the-

atres ; you will hear them talking and chaffing one another, envying this one's lover, ridiculing that one's, and in the midst of their chatter and the peals of laughter which fly back and forth around you you will catch smart, witty sentences and original expressions which you hear nowhere else, and at which you are constrained to laugh, at least unless you are of that school which is opposed to laughing and which dares to affirm that all laughter is merely a grimace. Good Lord ! What a sorry school ! take my advice, and don't send your children to it ; you must see that the result of doing so would not be happy.

Dupont, arriving in Paris, then, during the carnival time, began his bachelor life by going to the ball at l'Opera. He had said to himself,—

" The doctor ordered me to amuse myself, and it is impossible that I should avoid doing so in the midst of a crowd which is mostly composed of pretty women who are not positively of the Lucretian type, who desire nothing better than to make acquaintances, and who, indeed, go to the ball with that end only in view. I shall take my pick, I shall try to find a little woman cast in the mould of Venus — nay, even in that of a Bacchante, for all the Bacchantes as I have seen them represented were well-built. I shall be as pleasant and gallant as I possibly can ; I have a little wit when I care to use it ; in truth, my wit has grown somewhat rusty, but, what with perseverance and punch,

I have no doubt I shall do very well, and at all events I shall not go to bed at ten o'clock, because I shan't go to the ball till midnight."

Dupont had put his plan into execution ; he had had some trouble after ten o'clock had struck in preventing himself from falling asleep on his chair. Several times, instead of donning his black coat, he had been on the point of snuggling into bed, — but just at the moment when he was about to yield to the force of habit he had fortunately caught sight of his waistcoat and had perceived that it was impossible for him to fasten the lowest button of it ; he was on his feet immediately, in haste to accomplish his toilet for the ball.

"You idiot!" he said, apostrophizing himself, "do you want to have the figure of a Punch! I haven't a hump behind, it is true, but to have one in front is quite as ridiculous and a great deal more inconvenient. Let's go to this ball, let's frolic a bit, and amuse myself. The deuce! it's no joking matter, it's a question of keeping young."

Behold our man at the ball, then, gliding through the mob which thronged about the dancers, because there they could see the women nearer and could even ogle them, speak to them, or offer an arm to one who was without an escort ; all of which is permissible at a masked ball. And what is not there permissible?

Dupont saw some lightermen, sailors, jockeys, and postilions, with charmingly pretty faces, for

the ladies who assume masculine costume do not wear masks and are not at all averse to showing their faces. They wear their costumes with an abandon which displays somewhat too much of their neck and shoulders, for these ladies do not understand that something should be left to the imagination of the beholder and that people are more likely to fall in love with that which is concealed from them.

Dupont chose a very graceful little blonde in the costume of a columbine, and to break the ice he invited her to a polka; but our Brives-la-Gaillarde gallant did not quite comprehend the extent of his undertaking; he imagined that they danced at l'Opera ball as they did in his province; he was, above all, unaware that the polka terminated in a galop — and what a galop! it is necessary to see it in order to judge of it.

It is a vortex, a species of raging madness which seems to take possession of all the dancers at the sound of that brilliant, lively, animated music, which rouses them, electrifies them; they cease to galop, they fly, they whirl madly, they dart, they push and drive and upset one another. One must be fearless, one must keep one's head, if one doesn't want to be upset.

This was what happened to Dupont; he had not the strength to resist the impetus of this bacchanalian flight; he fell, and in falling he brought down his partner also, who said to him, ill-humoredly,—

"My good fellow, if you don't know how to galop you had no business to invite a lady to dance with you."

And the columbine immediately seized a harlequin by the arm and started off in the galop with him, while poor Dupont, who could not pick himself up so quickly, was struck by the feet of several galopers and rose covered with bruises.

Our man, who was a good deal hurt about the knees, the shoulders, and the back, left the ball and limped home to his hotel, where he put himself to bed, muttering as he did so,—

"That's quite enough amusement for to-night."

But Dupont would not allow that he was beaten, though he had been so in a most literal sense, and some nights thereafter he again repaired to the ball; this time he went to the Casino, for he had been told that there he would meet women of a higher class. In fact, our provincial was delighted by the elegance and beautiful dresses of these ladies, who were rather in society than in masquerading dress.

"It is hardly likely that they dance the galop here in so dangerous a fashion as at l'Opera ball," he said to himself. "As to that, for prudence sake, I shall not galop; I shall content myself with inviting a lady to dance a quadrille with me — that will be wiser. I am acquainted with the figures of a quadrille, which do not change, and it's impossible for me to get thrown down while dancing the ladies' chain or the pastourelle."

So Dupont, after walking several times round the ball-room in search of a well-built partner, invited a rather handsome person who fixed her languorous eyes on his with infinite condescension.

Dupont took his place in the dance ; but he had facing him a merry damsel, a pupil of the celebrated Rigolbache, whose bold and eccentric dancing was so renowned that people pushed for places to see her performances. When Dupont, therefore, advanced in his turn to meet this lady he suddenly received a superb high kick full in the face, amidst the shouts of applause and laughter of the spectators.

Dupont alone did not laugh. His nose was smashed and he began to complain, but the jolly damsel said to him,—

" It's your own fault. You're a muff, my good fellow ! you should have known that's the time I do a high kick. When people don't know my step they ought not to dance opposite me. Bribri wouldn't have got that kick ! "

As Dupont's nose pained him greatly and was bleeding, he departed from the ball and went home to bed, saying,—

" Well, I've got enough amusement for to-day ! "

Several days passed and, Dupont's nose being healed, he said to himself,—

" Well, let's have a whack at the ball again. I'm determined not to be done ; only this time I shan't dance."

And Dupont, attracted by the length of a notice, the width of which almost filled a whole column on the boulevard, went into the ball at the Salle Barthelémy. There the crowd was as dense as at l'Opera, but the company was much less refined, and the odor of pipes which was mingled with the smell of the refreshments people were consuming in the hall, the fumes of tobacco and the dust of the dance, gave to this ball a quite distinctive character.

However, Dupont had distinguished a little brunette of pleasing appearance, whose dress was somewhat akin to that of a grisette. She was alone, and he offered her his arm and some punch. The young girl hesitated, and answered,—

"You are very kind. I'm fond of punch, and I would willingly take some if I wasn't afraid of Ronfland."

"And who is Ronfland?"

"He's — he's my sweetheart, a cabinet-maker, a jolly fellow — only he gets tipsy too often. I came to the ball with him and he ought to have danced with me, but he didn't; and he went away and left me here. That's not very nice of him, is it?"

"After M. Ronfland left you here, it seems to me you were free to do as you pleased and to accept my arm and a glass of punch; you can't remain alone in this crowd, you need an escort."

"It's not very entertaining when one's alone,

to be sure! I don't understand Ronfland; he left me near the orchestra, saying, 'Stay there, I'll come back immediately.' And I've been here for more than an hour and he hasn't returned."

"He's forgotten you."

"Oh, I'm sure he's gone to get some refreshment!"

"Without you? That's not very polite! You see well that you've the right to do the same."

"Why, of course I have — well, so much the worse for Ronfland; after all, it is all his fault."

Dupont drew the little brunette's arm within his own, and led her to the ballroom café, where he had some punch brought and poured some out for his new acquaintance, who cheerfully accepted his hospitality, but kept on saying,—

"After this you'll dance with me, won't you, monsieur? For nobody goes to a ball except to dance."

But Dupont, who did not care to join the dance, continued to fill up their glasses as he answered,—

"Yes, later on, there's plenty of time. There are too many people dancing now, we shall be too warm; we'd much better refresh ourselves."

But suddenly a young man, with a kind of cap placed rakishly on one side, came up like a bomb, thumped on the table, upset the punch bowl and the glasses with a turn of the hand, and slapped the little brunette first on one cheek and then on the other, as he exclaimed,—

"So this is how you are conducting yourself, Josephine? I've caught you at it! I brought you to the ball and you play me tricks, flirt with other men. I'll make you behave, you jade!"

Josephine burst into tears, as she cried,—

"Ronfland, you are tipsy. I didn't play you any tricks; you shouldn't have left me — you're a drunkard, and I don't care for you any longer!"

However, Dupont was not in the humor to allow anyone to slap a woman who was with him; he began by picking up the empty punch bowl and using it on Ronfland's nose.

"Hang it," said he, "they crushed mine lately, and I'm not sorry to take my revenge."

But the young man in the cap became furious and sprang at Dupont, and they both rolled on the ground, thumping each other.

The guard came and put Ronfland and his sweetheart out. Dupont was obliged to pay for the breakage, and as he had got a big cut on his head he hurried home, saying,—

"It's only what I deserve; I ought to have foreseen it. Decidedly, I mustn't go to any more balls in search of amusement."

CHAPTER II

Mademoiselle Georgette. Young Colinet

The injuries received at the ball had kept our friend Dupont in his room for a week. He was lodging at a modest hotel in the Rue du Seine, and in order to pass the time of his convalescence, which seemed wearisomely long, our provincial did nothing but look out of the window. As he lodged on the third floor, and as the house opposite was not so high as the hotel, Dupont from the vantage of his window could see perfectly into the room of his opposite neighbor, who lodged in the attics.

"I've not had the best of luck in Paris up to the present," said Dupont reflectively, as he walked slowly about his room with his head swathed in bandages. "I have done all that I could to amuse myself, been everywhere that it seemed likely I should find a little enjoyment, but I can hardly congratulate myself on having been successful; however, I must allow that I sleep much less than I did at Brives-la-Gaillarde, above all since I received this wound on the head. Of one thing I am positively certain, and that is I shan't go to a ball again to look for feminine acquaintances.

But people sometimes go far to seek for that which is right beside them — and in one of these attic rooms opposite I have seen a young girl who is very pleasing to the eye and uncommonly well-built. I can judge of that much better for seeing her in very negligent attire, a dressing-jacket and a little fustian petticoat — so far as I am able to judge from here that simple little costume is most becoming; it shows off her small, supple waist, and her hips are, it must be acknowledged, beautifully formed, it is impossible not to admire such a figure!"

And Dupont, opening his window, although the cold was intense, stood boldly up and fixed his eyes on his neighbor's window. This window was closed, but the curtains were not drawn, and it was easy for him to look in and see the young girl who lived there, for at this very moment she was engaged in doing her hair in front of a little looking-glass which was attached to the fastening of the window.

"She has a roguish little face," said Dupont, "very lively brown eyes and a snub nose, a nose like Roxelana's. Her mouth is rather large, but her teeth are good, and she smiles very agreeably; altogether there's nothing remarkable about her face, and I prefer her figure. Oh, good! She's moving about her room, still in that charming costume, a white dressing-jacket, neatly drawn in at the waist, and that little striped petticoat that hangs

so well on her rounded figure. I can't see either her foot or ankle, but they must be admirable; a small, well-rounded waist always means a well-turned ankle. I'm really madly in love with that waist, I must get acquainted with that young person. She must have noticed my continual staring, but it doesn't seem to have displeased her, she doesn't look at all severe; on the contrary, her face is very cheerful and full of a mischief which seems to invite acquaintance. She must be a working girl. As soon as I can go out I must ask the porter opposite about her. I know how to make these people talk."

While awaiting information, Dupont, all taken up with his neighbor, slept still less, and sometimes did not close his eyes for a whole night. This was something gained, at any rate, and he said musingly,—

"How changed my wife will find me when I go back to Brives-la-Gaillarde. I am only afraid that down there I shall resume my habit of sleeping."

His cut being healed, Dupont could now take off the bandages in which his head had been wrapped. He hastened to leave his room and wend his way to the house of the young girl in the striped skirt and to go into the concierge's room —in Paris all the porters are concierges nowadays, as the shops have become repositories; the wine shops, business houses; hairdressers' shops, rejuvenating parlors; grocers' shops, colonial produce

warehouses; bakers, pastrycooks; dressmakers, tailors; libraries, reading-rooms; cafés, restaurants, even up to those gentlemen who are employed at night, all have changed their former names for finer ones.

Dupont put on his most amiable manner with the concierge and slipped into her hand an irresistible argument, for he found her to be a woman who was not loath to speak; she quickly laid aside her one-sou illustrated paper, and answered her interrogator without taking breath,—

"The young girl who lives on the third floor, the second window to the left, is named Georgette; she's an embroideress. My word! she's clever at it, too; they say she embroiders like a fairy. She's twenty years old, I believe, and she's only been in Paris a short time. She comes from Lorraine; she's very cheerful and willing to talk; however, I believe she is a very virtuous girl, though of course I wouldn't take my oath on it, one can never swear as to those things — one so often gets taken in. But, to be sure, I never see men going to Mademoiselle Georgette's. As to whether she knows any of them outside, that I don't know. You can understand that when she's out I'm not with her. For the rest, she leads a regular enough life; she never goes to a ball, though I don't believe it's because she doesn't wish to, for I've heard her say several times, 'How nice it must be to be able to amuse one's self. Wait till I have

twenty thousand francs income!' But although she has not got it, she's none the less merry. She's always singing; that's all I can tell you about her, for that's all I know."

Dupont scratched his forehead, muttering,—

"Twenty thousand francs income; the deuce! it won't be me who'll give it to her."

Then he resumed,—

"So this young girl is an embroideress."

"Yes, monsieur."

"Of what?"

"What do you mean by 'of what'?"

"I meant to say what does she embroider?"

"Why, collars, handkerchiefs, caps, everything that they embroider."

"Then I might ask her to embroider something for me."

"Certainly, if you wish to do so."

"Very well; I shall go up to Mademoiselle Georgette's, then."

"It's on the third floor, monsieur."

"Yes, I know."

"Yes, but there are several doors; it's the one where there's a toothbrush for a bell handle."

"I'll remember it."

While going upstairs, Dupont mused,—

"What the devil can I ask her to embroider? Oh, a cravat. I don't think it's the style for men to wear embroidered cravats, but no matter. I shall tell her it's the fashion in Brives-la-Gaillarde;

besides, what does it matter to the young girl provided she gets the work to do?"

Dupont had by this time arrived at the third floor, where there were several doors; but he perceived the toothbrush attached to the bell pull, and he boldly seized it.

Mademoiselle Georgette herself opened the door, and smiled mischievously when she saw who had come to see her. The young girl still wore a white dressing-jacket and a little fustian skirt; this costume was very becoming to her, it brought out all her points. If we dared, we would say that this costume is becoming to all women — adding, however, provided they are well-made.

"Is this Mademoiselle Georgette, the embroideress?" said Dupont, assuming a fatherly air.

"Yes, monsieur, that's me."

"Mademoiselle — I have come — I should be very much pleased — they told me —"

"Come in, monsieur, I can't talk to you on the landing."

Dupont desired nothing better than to respond to this invitation, he entered this room which he had as yet only half seen through the window. The furniture was extremely simple, but everything was exquisitely neat; the floor was waxed and polished, and there was not a grain of dust on anything; the bed was well-made and very white, and the whole condition of the place highly creditable to the person who dwelt there. Demosthenes,

interrogated as to what constituted an orator, replied, "Elocution, elocution, elocution"; a philosophical king, asked as to what would cause the ramparts of a city to fall, answered, "Money, money, money"; and Ninon, of whom someone inquired what she considered the true adornment of woman, responded, "Propriety, propriety, propriety."

The young girl offered Dupont a chair; she did the honors of her simple abode with infinite ease, and was not at all abashed in the presence of this gentleman. He it was, on the contrary, who in trying to assume an important manner became embarrassed and found it difficult to speak, the more so as Mademoiselle Georgette waited for him to do so as if she was restraining a great desire to laugh.

"Mademoiselle, I came to —"

"For something, I presume, monsieur?"

"Yes, mademoiselle; they told me that you did embroidery."

"They told you quite right. You have something you want embroidered?"

"Yes, — that's to say — I am not sure if they wear embroidered cravats in Paris?"

"No, monsieur; they are no longer in fashion."

"Oh, and what about cuffs?"

"Just the same."

"And — handkerchiefs?"

"For ladies? — oh, yes, monsieur, they embroider very beautifully on handkerchiefs."

"Oh, very well — they do embroider handkerchiefs!"

Dupont all the time he was talking was looking at the young girl's feet; these feet were small, even tiny, beautifully arched, and her ankles were very slender; these things distracted him and he muttered more than once,—

"So they do embroider handkerchiefs."

Presently Mademoiselle Georgette burst into a peal of laughter, which finished her visitor's discomfiture; he looked at her in astonishment, saying,—

"You are very cheerful, according to what I see, mademoiselle."

"Yes, monsieur, I am not a prey to melancholy."

"And might one ask what provoked your merriment in this instance?"

"Why, it was you, monsieur."

"Me! Oh, it was I who made you laugh? You think me very comical, then, mademoiselle?"

"Comical is not the word, monsieur; but truly, I don't think you are very apt at finding a pretext."

"A pretext — what do you mean? I don't quite understand you."

"It's very easy to understand, however; you wanted to have a motive — a reason for coming to my room, for you have nothing you want embroidered."

"What made you think that, mademoiselle?"

"Do you think I don't recognize you, monsieur?"

"Oh, you recognize me?"

"Of course I do, you live in the small hotel opposite, and you pass all your time in staring at me from there, and making eyes at me."

"Oh, you've noticed that?"

Here Dupont bridled up again; he was pleased to have been noticed, and he drew a favorable augury from the fact. The young embroideress continued,—

"Yes, monsieur, I've noticed that. Unless I was blind, I could not help seeing you. And then the other day you stationed yourself at the open window when it was horribly cold, and your nose was as blue as it could be. I had a great desire to make faces at you!"

Here Dupont compressed his lips and did not bridle up.

"I didn't make any because I thought, seeing your head all wrapped up, bandaged, that you were either wounded or ill, and one must pity those who suffer; but it seems that you're well now?"

"Yes, mademoiselle, I had been fighting a duel, and I was wounded on the head."

"Oh, you were fighting a duel? Perhaps you won't think me too curious if I ask you what was the motive of this duel?"

"It was a very distinguished lady with whom

I happened to be and whom a stranger looked at a little too closely."

"So you fought for a lady! Good enough! I forgive your sheep's eyes now; but, monsieur, after all, why did you come to see me to-day?"

"Since you are so quick at divining, mademoiselle, you might have suspected. I saw you from my window, I thought you charming and I wished to make your acquaintance."

"Well done! that is frank enough! and what object have you in making my acquaintance? Perhaps you hope to make me — your mistress."

"Mademoiselle, I don't go so far as to say that."

"No, but you think it? Isn't that always what the men are trying to do when they meet a poor girl who is weak enough, foolish enough, to believe them? But I wish to warn you that you will lose your time with me."

"At any rate, mademoiselle, it would be difficult to lose time more agreeably than in your company."

"You're very complimentary; but, monsieur, I must confess that I would much rather know people before allowing them to visit me in my room — and I don't know you."

"That's right, mademoiselle, that's very right; it's necessary to know with whom one is dealing."

And Dupont, who had prepared a little story in advance, settled himself in his chair and went on,—

"Mademoiselle, I came from the United States. I was formerly in business, but I have retired; I have sufficient means to enable me to follow my pleasure; I am a widower without chick or child, and, consequently, I can do as I please."

"Very good, monsieur. And your name is?"

"My name is Dupont."

"Dupont! Why, that is quite a French name; I thought they had rather English names in the United States."

"That depends on their origin — my family was French. Now that you know who I am, you will allow me to pay my respects to you sometimes, won't you?"

"I see nothing to prevent it, provided you haven't lied to me. For I warn you, I detest people who tell falsehoods."

Dupont bowed and, scratching his nose, answered,—

"Mademoiselle, you desired to know who I was, I have satisfied you on that point. Will it be allowable on my part—"

"To inquire who I am? Oh, that is soon told; you already know that my name is Georgette, that I am an embroideress. I was born at Toul, a pretty town in Lorraine, in the neighborhood of Nancy. My parents are poor; there are three sisters of us, of whom I am the youngest; my two elder sisters came to Paris in the hope of being more fortunate here and of being able to assist our

parents — they were unsuccessful. Poor sisters! Then they returned to our home."

"And you came to Paris in your turn. I wonder that your parents allowed you to come. They must have felt afraid that you would be no more fortunate than your sisters."

"Oh, but I wanted to come to Paris; I had resolved upon it, and when I make up my mind to do a thing, I do it."

"That shows determination of character."

"Yes, monsieur, and I am very determined."

"And since you have been in Paris, have you enjoyed yourself."

"Oh, so, so! — not very much. Certainly there is plenty to amuse one in Paris, one may take one's choice of pleasures. Plays, balls, promenades, concerts, are all delightful to those who can procure the means of frequenting them. But when one stays in one's room all day long and passes one's evenings in sewing or reading, one hardly enjoys living in Paris."

"That is true; but what prevents you from having all the pleasure you desire?"

"Why, it's because a woman can't go alone to the play or walk about by herself."

"No, of course not, but you can't have lacked cavaliers who were quite ready to escort you."

"But, then, I don't go with everybody, monsieur; I don't accept the arm of the first comer. Certainly, if I had listened to all the young men

who have followed me about, and who have wearied me with their foolish declarations of love — love which took them suddenly when they saw me passing along the street,—oh, opportunities have not been lacking! But that isn't what I want."

Dupont caressed his chin as he thought,—

"She's hard to please; she doesn't want to go about with a mere boy; she wants to make acquaintance with a proper sort of a man. All the chances are in my favor."

Mademoiselle Georgette had resumed her embroidery and looked slyly from under her lashes at the face her visitor was making. The latter watched her work and exclaimed,—

"Mademoiselle, you embroider to perfection."

"Do you think so, monsieur? Do you know anything about embroidery?"

"Yes, I have a wi — a sister who embroiders also."

"She is in the United States?"

"Yes, and she is going to stay there."

"As to me, monsieur, it isn't anything wonderful if I can embroider well; I come from a district renowned for its embroideries. It is at Nancy that the very finest embroidery is made."

"And you are from Nancy?"

"No, but Toul is close by. Well, then, do you want me to embroider you some handkerchiefs?"

Dupont laughed, then he answered,—

"By Jove! no; and since you so easily found

out that I came here in the hope of making your acquaintance, mademoiselle, shall I have the happiness of being allowed to cultivate it, to come and see you, and even to escort you to the play or take you for a walk?"

Mademoiselle Georgette reflected for some moments, looked at Dupont and said,—

"You have not lied to me in what you have said about your circumstances? You are entirely without ties and a widower?"

Dupont answered without hesitation,—

"No, mademoiselle, I have not lied to you."

"In that case, monsieur, come and visit me. I shall be very pleased to see you."

"Oh, mademoiselle, you make me the happiest of men!"

"But you mustn't stay too long when you come, because that would compromise me."

Dupont rose, bowed to the young embroideress, and departed.

"She'll be mine yet," he said, as he went down. "I shall perhaps have to wait longer than I wish, but it's only a question of time. She'll be mine, and I have no desire at all to sleep."

A fortnight had elapsed. Dupont came very often to his neighbor's room; he was more taken with her than ever, for in addition to her personal charms mademoiselle possessed wit, gayety, and very pleasing conversational powers, all of which was more than sufficient to turn the head of our

provincial friend, who had lost his appetite and did not sleep for two hours together at night because his love was as yet unrequited and was fed daily to a fiercer flame by the sight of the object which had evoked it. But in one respect he was no further advanced than on the first day of his acquaintance. If he took the young girl's hand she laughingly drew it away. If he tried to put his arm around her waist she assumed a severe expression and said to him, in a very decided tone,—

"If you don't have done I shall show you the door, and you won't come in again."

Then Dupont understood that it would be well for him to comport himself with more decorum, and he would take himself off, muttering,—

"It will take me a long time — much longer than I had expected, but in the end I must be successful, for if I had not made an impression on this young girl she would not receive my calls or go out with me,— and she would not accept my presents. She pretends to be hard-hearted, but she's only leading me on. That is her coquetry, craft; but there! it cannot last forever."

In fact, mademoiselle was perfectly willing to accompany Dupont to the play, to a concert, or to take his arm for a walk. As to the dancing hall, Dupont did not offer to go there, and she did not seem to desire to go either; what she had always refused, up to this time, was to dine with him at a restaurant, in a private room.

"I like to dine with you at the restaurant very much," said she to Dupont, "but we will dine in the public room, with everybody else."

In vain Dupont repeated,—

"They don't serve you so well in the dining-room, and then, it's bad form — ladies who dine at the restaurant never sit at the public table."

Georgette was inflexible, she would not yield. Generally, she did not look as if she went with Dupont for the sake of being in his company, but rather as if she went to see what was going on in the world and to be seen herself.

Georgette's dress was very simple, and Dupont sagely reflected,—

"One may sometimes win a woman through her love of adornment, her vanity."

Following this reasoning, he sent the young embroideress a very pretty shawl, a silk dress, and a fashionable bonnet. She had received these presents without making any ado, and the same day, even, she decked herself out in them to go with him to the Opera-Comique; and when on bringing her back in the evening Dupont asked permission to go up to her room for a minute or two she shut the door in his face, saying,—

"What now? It's quite enough to let you come in during the daytime."

When out with Dupont, Georgette frequently made conquests, and then our provincial became exceedingly jealous, for he found his companion

was sometimes rather absent-minded and that she gave to other men that attention which he craved for himself.

The damsel appeared to have a strong vein of curiosity ; often at the theatre she pointed out some handsome young dandy and said to Dupont,—

"Do you know that gentleman in the box opposite, who holds an opera glass in his hand?"

"No, I don't know him at all," answered Dupont, ill-humoredly, "I don't know anybody in Paris."

"Oh, true enough! I forgot you were from America. That's a pity."

"What's a pity?"

"Why, that you don't know anybody in Paris."

"And if I did know the young man you pointed out, what good would it do you?"

"Why, none at all — it was simply for the sake of knowing."

Then another time it was a man of middle age, but who was attired in the latest fashion and assumed all the manners of a young dandy, whom Mademoiselle Georgette noticed as they were walking along and whom she pointed out to her faithful swain, again putting the question,—

"Do you know who that gentleman is?"

"And how the devil do you think I should know?"

"That's so, you come from the United States! I didn't think of that."

Alone in his own room, Dupont pondered on this.

"Why," said he to himself, "does she thus question me in regard to the men we meet in our walks or at the theatre? She can't suppose it's very amusing to me. She's very coquettish, is this young damsel — she lowers her eyes so modestly when anyone glances at her, she looks as though she delighted in making a good impression! However, she is prudent, very prudent, nobody should know that better than I. But she likes nothing better than to go about and show herself. Oh, she's extremely well-made. When she's on my arm everybody admires her walk, her figure, above all her foot and ankle. How can anyone help falling in love with such perfection? I've lost my appetite for both meat and drink — and for a long time past I've lost my sleep; — I'm growing thin visibly, and if this keeps on, instead of looking like Punch, I shall look like a clown in a pantomime."

Dupont had one day been for some minutes with his pretty neighbor; he was watching her embroider and trying to persuade her that he was very much in love with her, but the young girl listened to him indifferently, as one who is thinking of something else than what is being said to her, when two raps were heard at the door.

"Is someone knocking at your door?" said Dupont, appearing surprised.

"Why, yes, I thought I heard a knock."

"Do you expect anyone?"

"No; but that's no reason why some one shouldn't come. You came, and I wasn't expecting you."

"Wait, they're knocking again; oh, I'm sure it's at your door."

"Come in," cried Georgette, "the key is in the door."

In fact, the young embroideress always carefully left the key outside when Dupont was with her, in order to give less chance for gossip.

Some one opened the door, and a young man appeared and paused on the doorsill.

He must have been about twenty, though he hardly looked it. His fresh, open face was very boyish; his big blue eyes, gentle and affectionate, had almost the charm of a woman's; a light down covered his chin; his forehead was still white and unwrinkled, and his light chestnut hair hung about it naturally. He was, in fact, a very handsome boy of middle height, but with well-rounded limbs and graceful figure, and his dress was neither that of a peasant nor that of a denizen of Paris.

He wore almost tight cloth trousers, over which he had high leather gaiters, a velvet waistcoat with metal buttons, and a heavy hunting-jacket made of cloth with a rough nap. He held in his hand a round-shaped felt hat with a broad brim and a big knotty stick.

"Does Mamzelle Georgette live here, if you please?" he asked.

But at the accents of that voice, the young embroideress rose quickly, exclaiming,—

"Colinet — it is Colinet!"

And she ran towards the individual who appeared; she took his hand, put her arms around his neck, and kissed him several times, with every token of the most heartfelt joy, saying,—

"Dear old Colinet, how delighted I am to see you!"

And the young man answered,—

"And I also am very pleased to see you again, Georgette. For I had no idea Paris was so big, and when I first saw it I feared I should never find you!"

Dupont looked on at all this with a singular expression of countenance, as he thought,—

"It seems that she lets him kiss her! — in fact, he fared still better, for she was the first to kiss him. Deuce take it! shall I ever be anything but an idiot. It's very mortifying."

Georgette took the young man by the hand, made him come in, and presented him to M. Dupont, saying,—

"This is one of the friends of my infancy. Oh, yes, we often played together when we were little, didn't we, Colinet?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle Georgette."

"That's all very well, so long as they don't want

to play together now," thought Dupont, who was forced to confess that the young man was a very taking fellow; then he said to Georgette,—

"Is monsieur from your part of the country?"

"Yes, of course, he's just come from there. Haven't you just arrived, Colinet?"

"Yes, mademoiselle, I arrived yesterday evening at the 'Tin Plate' hotel, Saint Martin's Square, where I'm staying."

"My mother? my father? my sisters? Tell me all about them?"

"Everybody is well, thank heaven, and everybody told me to kiss you for them."

"Well, then, kiss me for each one."

Young Colinet hastened to obey Georgette's bidding, and began kissing her again. Dupont made a face as long as a yardstick, and grumbled to himself,—

"Do they want to pass all their time kissing each other? This chap's got more kisses in two minutes than I've been able to obtain in a month. I must really change my tactics."

When young Colinet had done kissing her, Georgette made him sit down and said to him,—

"Didn't my sisters give you any messages for me?"

"Oh, excuse me! Mademoiselle Aimée, your eldest sister, gave me a letter for you. I've got it in my pocket here."

"Oh, give it to me — give it to me quick!"

M. Colinet handed Georgette a letter; she seized it quickly and went to the window to read it, without troubling about her company.

Dupont then turned towards the newcomer, and said to him,—

"Were you ever in Paris before?"

"No, monsieur, this is the first time."

"Do you intend to remain here?"

"Oh, no, monsieur, I even promised my mother not to stay longer than four days. I'm going back home on Saturday."

This answer was highly satisfactory to Dupont. He began to look more amiable.

"You are in business?"

"I raise sheep, and my father raises calves."

"That's a fine occupation; our forefathers were more or less given to cattle raising; we of today content ourselves with eating them, which is not as useful, since it doesn't tend to multiply the races."

Dupont, satisfied at knowing that young Colinet would only remain for a short time in Paris, took his hat and said to his neighbor,—

"I will leave you with your countryman. You must have much to say to a friend of your childhood."

CHAPTER III

An Ingenuous Youth. A Private Room

When Dupont went to call upon his pretty neighbor during the next day, he found young Colinet still there. The youth looked quite as bashful and ill at ease as on the evening before. He was sitting opposite Georgette and watching her as she worked at her embroidery without breathing a word; but, despite his shyness, his expression was radiant, as though it made him very happy merely to sit and look at her.

"Well, M. Colinet," said Dupont, "and how have you been amusing yourself since I saw you yesterday? Have you been learning your way about Paris?"

"Yes a little; I've been to see the animals in the Jardin des Plantes, monsieur; but I like my sheep and lambs much better than I do the lions and tigers, and I can't help wondering why they give savage and cruel beasts like those such fine cages, while my harmless and useful sheep often have no pens."

"Why," answered Dupont, smiling at the honest fellow's utter simplicity, "you know they are obliged to put the tigers into iron cages because

the beasts are savage and they are afraid of them, — as for your sheep, they harm nobody, and so no one takes any notice of them and they are left to graze in freedom."

"My sheep don't always find enough to graze on in the fields, while I've seen them give huge quantities of meat to your savage tigers."

"That's for precisely the same reason; they are afraid of them, so they have to keep them well fed."

"Colinet, you must go to the play while you are in Paris."

"With you, Mamzelle Georgette?"

"Yes, M. Dupont here will take both of us."

"Come, that's good!" said Dupont to himself. "So I must treat M. Colinet too; still, I'd rather do that than have her go there with him alone."

"Will you kindly take us to the theatre this evening, monsieur?" resumed Georgette, addressing Dupont.

"Why, of course, mademoiselle, with the very greatest pleasure. Am I not always at your orders, and only too happy to make myself agreeable to you?"

"Yes, monsieur, I know you are extremely obliging; but I don't want to take advantage of your good-nature."

"You cannot put it too greatly to the proof. You are aware of my feeling towards you; I have made no secret of the fact that I am your faithful knight."

Young Colinet looked from Dupont to Georgette; he seemed as if he could not quite make them out. The pretty embroideress burst into a fit of laughter as she said,—

"Then we will go to the Cirque-Nationale; they play pantomimes with dissolving views, which will amuse you very much, Colinet."

"I will go wherever you like, Mamzelle Georgette."

"That's singular," said Dupont to himself, "she speaks very familiarly to the young man; she doesn't address him as monsieur, but it is quite otherwise with him; however, that is much better than if it was the other way about."

In the evening Dupont took Mademoiselle Georgette and young Colinet to the Theatre du Cirque, on the Boulevard du Temple. I need not tell you that some of the many theatres which formerly made this boulevard so gay are not yet demolished. They played a pantomime where the dances mingle with the illusion, changing with the decorations. The rather slight costumes of the dancers made Colinet lower his eyes and sometimes even turn his head away, in contra-distinction to most of the spectators, who pointed their opera glasses at the ladies of the ballet.

"Come, what are you thinking of now?" exclaimed Dupont, nudging the young man; "you don't look at the best evolutions."

Colinet reddened as he answered,—

"I'm afraid of making those ladies angry if I look at them when they take those high kicks on our side."

"Poor fellow, he certainly is not dangerous," said Dupont to himself. "But, all the same, my pretty embroideress doesn't pay any attention to anybody but him; when I speak to her she hardly answers me, and she looks as if she weren't listening to me. The sooner the young friend of her infancy returns to his sheep the better I shall like it."

Dupont's wishes were soon fulfilled; on Saturday Colinet said good-by to Georgette. She gave him two letters to take to her sisters and several kisses for her parents. The young man departed sadly, saying to Georgette,—

"Why don't you come back with me? I should be so happy to take you home to the country — do you like Paris so much, mamzelle?"

"It isn't that I like it so much, Colinet, but I ought to stay here for a time yet — I must stay."

"And shall you have to stay for long?"

"I don't know; I hope not. I assure you, Colinet, that the day I return to my parents' house will be the happiest one in my life."

"And so it will be for me, mamzelle."

"Really Colinet? you feel, then, a good deal of friendship for me?"

"I don't know if that's what I feel, but I should like never to leave you."

"We shall see each other again, Colinet; think of me sometimes. For my part, I shan't forget you."

"Oh, Mamzelle Georgette, that promise makes me very happy."

And to prove his joy the poor boy gave way to tears; then he kissed Georgette and ran off as fast as his legs could carry him, because he felt that if he stayed any longer he should lack the courage to depart.

Dupont called on his neighbor in the afternoon; he found her sad and thoughtful, and he said to her,—

"I suppose the young shepherd is gone?"

"Yes, monsieur. He's very fortunate, for he will see my father and my mother."

"No doubt. But, after all, it's very monotonous to see nothing but sheep. Look you, charming Georgette, there is no other such place as Paris. It's the abode of all the pleasures; it is there that all our men of great talent win the applause and renown which are their due. In fact, one really lives in Paris; while elsewhere one only vegetates."

"If that were true, monsieur, it would be very unfortunate for a good many people, for the entire world cannot live in Paris. But I think that one may be very happy elsewhere, when one is near those whom one loves and when one knows how to limit one's desires."

"That's right, charming Georgette; you speak

like Virgil and like Delille. It was, I believe, the latter who said,—

True pleasure in the country ever doth abide ;
There men most fear the gods, and best make love beside.

As to making love, however, not that I dispute Delille, they make it very well in Paris,— they approach perfection indeed, in that respect ; and if only you were a little less severe with me — But you are absent-minded ; it seems to me you are not listening to me."

" What were you saying to me, monsieur ? "

" There ! I was sure of it ; you were not listening to me. But I will excuse you ; your young friend's departure has saddened you. Let's see, you must have some amusement ; tomorrow is Sunday, we must go somewhere. Will you come to dinner with me at a restaurant ? "

" I should like that very much."

" I will come here and get you at five o'clock. We'll go and have dinner at Bonvalet's on the boulevard."

" Wherever you like — it's all the same to me."

" Yes, yes ; we'll go to Bonvalet's, everything's good there ; and afterwards go to one of the theatres opposite. That's understood and settled ; and until then, I'll leave you to your reflections. Good-by, my dear neighbor, till tomorrow."

Dupont went off rubbing his hands and saying to himself,—

" Tomorrow will see me successful. From here

I shall go to Bonvalet's ; I shall speak to one of the waiters, I shall attach him to my interests and I shall hire a private room in advance, though I have to pay its weight in gold."

The next day at five o'clock one may imagine that Dupont did not lose any time in going to Georgette's room. He found her dressed ready to go out, but still thoughtful, still anxious in expression.

"You must certainly miss the young friend of your childhood very much," said Dupont to her, smiling. "You who used to be so cheerful and who were always singing ; why, I hardly know you."

"It is not Colinet's departure that troubles me," answered Georgette.

"It's not that, hey. Then it must be something else."

"Perhaps it is."

"And are you going to tell me what it is ? "

"I believe not."

"Well, then, we may as well go to dinner."

They went to the restaurant on the Boulevard du Temple. Just as they were going up the stairs which led to the first story three gentlemen were coming down who seemed to have been dining very well. One of them, who was opposite Dupont, uttered an exclamation of surprise when he saw the latter, and struck him very playfully in the waistcoat as he exclaimed,—

"Well, now, this is an unexpected meeting; why, Dupont, my dear fellow, you are in Paris and haven't been to see me?"

Dupont became scarlet, he stammered, hung down his head and muttered,—

"Why, is it you, Jolibois? Good-day. How are you? Good-by."

And he endeavored to pass with Georgette, whose hand was on his arm; but M. Jolibois took hold of his arm, saying,—

"Well, now, must you be in such a hurry when you meet an old friend? And how long is it since you left Brives-la-Gaillarde? and your wife, is she with you? You can't run away from me, look you; for I am pleased to see you, my good fellow. Do you still sleep like a dormouse? for that's just what you did when I was in Brives-la-Gaillarde, and your wife used to complain of it; yes, she complained of it a good deal, did your dear better half!"

Dupont was in torture; if he had dared, he would have given his friend Jolibois a good punch to make him loose his hold, at the risk of causing him to roll down the stairs. But he restrained himself and endeavored to disengage his arm, saying,—

"Jolibois, you've dined — and dined very well, as I can see; but madame and I have not dined, and we want to rejoin the party who are waiting for us upstairs. I will come and see you, but leave

me now, Jolibois. Come, my dear lady, they are waiting for us."

And making a new effort, Dupont this time managed to get his arm free. He immediately led Georgette up the stairs, leaving his friend Jolibois, who, as he watched the couple go up, shouted,—

"Oh, you humbug! do you think you can take me in? But I understand, I see how it is. Dupont, you're a humbug; but you needn't be uneasy, I shan't tell your wife."

Georgette said not a word; she had mercy on the piteous state into which this encounter had thrown her cavalier. They reached the corridor of the first floor; Dupont recognized his waiter and went to meet him,—

"Waiter, we should like a table in one of the large dining-rooms."

"There are none, monsieur, they are all occupied. On Sunday it is very difficult to find one free, unless you come very early. But I happen to have a private room, which someone is just about to leave, and I'll let you have that."

Dupont looked at Georgette, who answered,—

"We wish to dine in a public room. We'll go and take a turn on the boulevard and come back a little later on, when you can probably find us a place."

"Just as you like, sweetheart," said Dupont, who dared not insist, because the meeting with his

friend Jolibois had rendered him quite crestfallen, but who as he went off made other signs to the waiter.

They returned to the boulevard, but the weather was not fine, it was drizzling and there was mud even on the asphalt; but despite that, being Sunday, there were a good many people on the boulevards, because in Paris, whatever the weather, there are a number of people who absolutely must walk, and who, when the rain comes down in torrents and scatters them, reappear a few minutes later armed with umbrellas and walk along, looking at the shops as unconcernedly as though it were the height of summer.

Dupont had offered his arm to Georgette; he did not know how to begin the conversation, for he was very much embarrassed. The young girl enjoyed his confusion for some moments, then she exclaimed,—

"Well, now, Monsieur l'Americain of Brives-la-Gaillarde, the meeting with your friend Jolibois seems to have made you quite dumb, and that would indeed be a pity, for you sometimes say very pretty things."

Dupont endeavored to resume his usual assurance and answered,—

"My charming neighbor, I confess that this meeting was not very pleasing to me."

"Oh, that I can well believe."

"First of all, Jolibois was tipsy—it was very

easy to see that he had been drinking and did not know what he was saying. He recognized me and later on took me for another—"

Georgette interrupted him ; she looked him full in the eyes and said very dryly,—

" M. Dupont, do you take me for an idiot?"

" Me, mademoiselle? Why, God forbid. I've had time to learn, on the contrary, that you have a good deal of mind — that your reasoning is perfect — that you also possess much tact and not a little mischief."

" Then, monsieur, don't try to impose upon me longer with the falsehoods you have been telling me all along, and in which, to tell you the truth, I always put very little faith ; for you look a good deal more like a Limousin than like an American. You have never been in America ; you came from Brives-la-Gaillarde, as your friend Jolibois said. But what I can least forgive you is that you passed yourself off for a widower while your wife is still alive. For shame ! monsieur, for shame ! to disown your wife ! That is unworthy."

Dupont saw it was no use to lie; he stammered,—

" Mademoiselle — well, yes, it's true ; I confess. But I so greatly desired to make your acquaintance, and had I told you I was married you would not perhaps have consented to receive me."

" And why not? On the contrary, that would have given me more confidence in you. I should

have said, 'There's a man who is not seeking to deceive me.' But to pretend to be a widower; to wish to act the bachelor here while your poor wife is mourning your absence, no doubt!"

"Oh, no, as to that you can be quite easy; my wife is not mourning my absence at all. She was one of the first to advise me to come to Paris and to come here without her."

"And to say you were a bachelor?"

"Oh, I don't say that she went so far as that; but when a wife allows her husband to travel without her she is usually quite willing that he should play the bachelor; in fact, my dear little neighbor, since men are not nuns, you may very well understand —"

"Enough, monsieur, enough! Not another word on the subject."

"Oh, I ask nothing better than to drop it. Why, it seems to me the drizzling is turning to rain."

"Yes, it is raining. Let us go back to the restaurant; perhaps there will be places now."

They returned to Bonvalet's, where the waiter said as before,—

"All the tables in the public room are occupied; but I happen to have a private room which I advise you to take at once before some one else takes it."

Dupont looked inquiringly at Georgette, who answered,—

"Well, let us take the private room, since we cannot do otherwise."

Our gallant was delighted. The waiter led the couple into a small room, where it was very warm and snug, and where two covers were already laid.

"One would really think they had expected us," said Georgette, as she laid aside her bonnet and shawl.

"At a restaurant they are always expecting somebody."

"Yes, but two covers all ready."

"The room is probably intended only for two persons."

"It's no matter; order the dinner quickly, monsieur, for I am very hungry."

"I should like to know what you prefer."

"Oh, I like everything."

"And I dislike nothing; so that matter is soon settled."

Dupont ordered a well-chosen dinner, very dainty and choice, and with a great variety of wines. He wanted to seat himself on a sofa beside Georgette, but the latter obliged him to take a place opposite her, on the other side of the table, saying,—

"You will crowd me if you sit there, and I like to eat my dinner comfortably."

"I mustn't contradict her," said Dupont to himself, "I must go softly; I must overlook a good many things. Wait till we have had some of these generous wines."

Georgette did honor to the dinner, but she drank very little, although her companion did his best to induce her to take more, exclaiming as he poured out the first beaune,—

"Don't on any account put water with this wine —that would be murder; it's the very best beaune there is."

"It's exactly the same to me," answered the young embroideress; "I never drink wine alone, I prefer it with water."

"That's all right in regard to ordinary wine, but with this, which costs four francs a bottle, it's a crime to put water."

"Then, my dear M. Dupont, I must ask you to give me some ordinary wine, for surely you don't want to make me commit a crime."

Dupont was vexed; but to make up for his disappointment in regard to his young companion, he was careful not only to drink his beaune unadulterated, but to drink enough of it to restore his assurance and his cheerfulness. He soon began to risk some rather tender speeches; but Georgette interrupted him suddenly by saying,—

"And your wife, is she pretty?"

Dupont scowled and answered, after a pause,—

"She's not bad looking, but she is not so well made as you are, not by a long way. I only wish she had your figure."

"Are her eyes dark or blue?"

"They're gray — like those of cats."

"Oh, what a pity! What, your wife has cat's eyes?"

"That's all the same to me. What a sweet mouth you have yourself; your smile is enchanting."

"And are her teeth good?"

"Whose teeth?"

"Why, your wife's."

"Good heavens! mademoiselle, are you only going to talk to me about my wife? I may as well tell you that it was not for that that I wanted you to take dinner with me."

"That's very possible, but that subject of conversation is very pleasing to me."

"Besides, beautiful Georgette, must I repeat to you again that in Paris I have no wife, I am a bachelor once more —"

"Oh, I know well enough you want to make people believe you are one. But as to that, my dear M. Dupont, you may rest quite assured of one thing, which is that it's perfectly indifferent to me whether you be married or a bachelor."

Dupont inquired mentally how he ought to take that, and ended by pouring some grenache for his companion, remarking to her,—

"This is the wine for ladies; it's very sweet and will not bear water."

Georgette swallowed a sip of grenache, and put her glass down.

"I don't like these sugary wines," she said.

"Hang it, what is it that she does like, then?" said Dupont; and to console himself, he emptied his glass at one draught.

But by the means he employed to regain his assurance this gentleman became as red as his friend Jolibois, and when they brought the champagne he had left his chair and was asking Georgette to dance the polka with him. The latter laughed in his face and sent him back to his place; Dupont poured some champagne for himself, and offered some to the young girl, exclaiming,—

"Do you dislike champagne also?"

"Oh, no, that has a briskness, a sparkle which keeps one awake. Does your wife like it?"

Dupont struck his fist on the table, then he shouted,—

"Decidedly you are making game of me; but you'll pay me for it. That deserves vengeance, and I'm going to revenge myself by kissing you."

As he said these words he rose, darted towards Georgette and tried to clasp her waist; but the latter stopped him with a firm hand and said,—

"M. Dupont, none of these games here, or I shall be very seriously angry."

"What, angelic creature, will you still refuse me a kiss?"

"I shall always refuse you everything of the kind, be persuaded of that."

"But — but — why then you've been playing with me, making game of me."

"And how have I made fun of you, monsieur?"

"What do you mean? In what? Why in everything. When a person accepts gallantries, a man's attentions, when she is willing to accept presents from him — a shawl, a bonnet, I know not what all — it isn't to send him walking later, do you understand, mademoiselle?"

"I understand, monsieur, that you are as foolish as you are impertinent. When have I ever allowed you to think that I would be anything more to you than a friendly acquaintance? You reproach me because I took a few miserable presents. I have given you a great deal more in consenting to receive you, to go out walking with you, to go to the play with you, to put my arm in yours. Do you count all that nothing, monsieur?"

"I don't say that. But you have consented to dine with me in a private room, and when a woman does that — she doesn't do it to play the prude, everybody knows that."

"Monsieur, I felt quite safe in dining with you, for you have never endangered my peace of mind."

"Then why have you refused up to this time?"

"Because I did not wish to give you hopes which you could not realize."

"And why did you accept to-day?"

"Because it tired me to walk in the rain. But be easy, monsieur, it won't happen again."

Dupont was very vexed; but his self-conceit, the wine he had taken, the mocking glances of the

young girl, who seemed to be defying him, all mounted to his head and this time he decided to brave Mademoiselle Georgette's anger; he tried to kiss her; a slap in the face rudely applied was the price of his audacity.

"Leave me, monsieur," said Georgette, rising, "you are impertinent. I don't wish to remain a moment longer with you."

"I'm very sorry for that, my fair neighbor, but I can't let you go," answered Dupont, who was excited and who had seized hold of the little striped skirt which Georgette wore under her gown. "No, no; I hold this delightful little skirt which becomes you so well, which I have admired, contemplated so often, and I shan't let go of it."

"Oh, well, keep it then, monsieur, for it is all that you will have of me."

So saying, Georgette immediately managed to let her skirt fall about her feet. She jumped over it, snatched up her cap and shawl and ran from the room before Dupont, who still clasped the little striped petticoat in his hand, had recovered from his astonishment.

CHAPTER IV

The Second Skirt. The Gentleman Who Did Not Ruin Himself For The Fair Sex

Very early in the morning on the day after the dinner which had had so unsatisfactory an ending for Dupont, Mademoiselle Georgette left her modest chamber in the Rue du Seine, for at the half term, foreseeing that she might need to do so, she had been careful to give notice to her landlord.

This time she rented a small apartment in the Marais, on the Boulevard Beaumarchais, where very fine, handsomely built houses now replace the quiet walks shaded by grand old trees which in former times had continually served as delightful meeting-places, where the young lovers of the immediate neighborhood had found the seclusion they desired.

The young embroideress had substituted for her attic room an apartment which was in itself very modest, but which indicated a less precarious position and more means; it was more comfortably furnished also, and although it was not the abode of a fashionable woman, neither was it that of a grisette.

Mademoiselle Georgette had also changed her occupation; she had quitted that of embroidering and assumed that of shirtmaking and, as she could sew as well as she could embroider, she did not lack work.

Her little fustian skirt was also succeeded by one of black silk, which flowed in simple folds about her graceful figure, and was short enough to show a very slender ankle, from which sprang a shapely plump calf.

In her little home the pleasing shirtmaker still kept the costume she had worn in the Rue du Seine; a snow-white dressing jacket, fitting closely to her slim waist, and the short petticoat which became her so well. Add to those, spotless white stockings, a small, well-shod foot, and you may be sure that she would have turned the head of any man who had seen her in this provoking negligé.

Georgette this time lived at the end of a court; but the court was handsome, airy, and well-kept, forming a regular square. The apartments at the end of the court naturally had an outlook on the boulevard and on the court, while those situated on either side had a view of the court only, and when the occupants placed themselves at their windows they only needed leisure to allow them to observe all that went on in the houses opposite.

Georgette occupied two small rooms in an

entresol.[1] Above her lived an old lady of independent means with her domestic, and the united ages of the pair mounted up to more than a century. In the story above that dwelt some good shopkeepers, who always went to bed at half past ten; and above that again, a lady who gave music lessons. The main body of the building to her left was occupied by, first, an unmarried clerk, who kept a maid-of-all-work. Then, a lady of uncertain age who had been very pretty and was still very coquettish, and who made up with rice powder, cold cream, rouge, blue, and black, and regretted the patches with which the ladies formerly covered their faces, but who, with the aid of a black pin made red-hot, had made two beauty spots; one on her left cheek, and the other in a place where no one ever saw it.

But if no one ever saw it, you are about to say, why did she make one there?

Oh, you are too curious. Those who are endowed with second sight, don't they see everything, even that which is invisible to other mortals? The second beauty spot was for these latter; magnetism is a precious science.

Above this lady, who called herself Madame Picotee, were two young men who were engaged in the pursuit of literature; which, however, did not deter them from gazing at their neighbors

[1] Entresol: mezzanine floor. A low story peculiar to French houses, placed between the groundfloor and the first floor.

when the latter were pleasing. In the courtyard to the left, on the first floor, was a staymaker's workshop; on the second floor, a miniature painter; on the third, a photographer; the garret was reserved for the servants' bedrooms.

The main body of the building which looked on the boulevard had the handsomest apartments, and was consequently tenanted by people of higher position. On the first story was a very rich gentleman who had two servants, a housekeeper and a valet. On the second floor was a young married couple; the gentleman was in business, the lady was lackadaisical; madame was pretty and coquettish, monsieur was ugly and a rake; they had a very wide-awake little parlor-maid and a cook who got tipsy.

Finally, the third story was occupied by a young man who had just received his degree as a doctor and to whom nothing was now lacking but patients; he looked for them, he begged for them everywhere; he would have made them had that been possible; but only, be it understood, that he might have the pleasure of caring for them and the reputation of curing them.

Since Mademoiselle Georgette had come to live in the little entresol at the end of the court all eyes had been turned on her, and the feminine part of the community had been the first to seek to know and judge the new neighbor; for women are more curious than men, that is a recognized fact.

It was easy to obtain a sight of the tenant who had lately moved in; it was in the month of April, the springtime, and the weather was very fine; the sun often shone, and Mademoiselle Georgette, who was pleased to receive so distinguished a guest in her little entresol, left her windows open almost every day that he might have free ingress, and, according to her custom, worked beside her casement in the costume you wot of: the dressing-jacket drawn in at the waist and the little skirt smoothly fitted over the hips.

The neighbors, therefore, had every chance of looking at her at their ease; as she was very attractive, very alluring in her simple costume, the ladies did not fail to find that it was unconventional and very unbecoming to its wearer. They decided that the little shirtmaker did not know how to dress herself, and that she had no beauty beyond her youthful freshness.

The lady who rouged even went so far as to say that the young girl's skirt was indecent, because it permitted the outlines of her form to be discerned. It must be conceded that this lady had no outlines herself which could by any possibility be discerned; but as a set-off or indemnification she was very fond of going to the circus to watch the feats of horsemanship, and she had never found anything to say against the tights and the very airy draperies worn by most of the equestrians.

The men who had apartments in Georgette's

house were not at all of the same opinion as the ladies. They, on the contrary, found the young girl very attractive, very well made, and they were strong in praise of the grace with which she wore her modest toilet. The little black skirt was thought charming from the first story to the top floor, and the neighbors said among themselves,—

"Have you seen the young girl in the little short skirt? the one who lives in the entresol?'

"Yes, she is very taking, is that damsel; she has a neat waist and a very well-developed figure. She reminds me of the famous Spanish dancer, Camera Petra."

"Yes, yes, it's the way her skirt hangs. I've seen her in the court, getting water from the pump."

"And always in the same simple dress."

"Yes, always. Oh, gentlemen, if you had but seen her pump! How graceful she was, as her skirt fluttered with every movement she made. I don't wonder they rave over her."

"She has, moreover, a very pretty leg and a tiny foot."

"She's a very pleasing young girl!"

"I must try to make her acquaintance."

"And I also."

"And I too."

"And I," said the photographer to himself, "I shall quickly make it, because I shall offer to

take the little neighbor's portrait on a card, and all young girls are pleased to have their portraits taken."

There was one gentleman there who made no remark; certainly he was too important a person to chat with his neighbors. This was the one who lived in the apartment on the first floor on the opposite side. This person was called M. de Mardeille; was he noble[1] or was he not? That matters little to us; one thing is certain, and that is that he had somewhere in the neighborhood of twenty-five thousand francs' income, of which he never spent the whole amount in any one year.

M. de Mardeille was then fifty years of age, but did not appear more than forty-five; he had been a very handsome young man and was still quite good-looking. He had been fortunate in that his figure had not increased duly with his age, and he could still find favor in the eyes of the fair sex; for to his physical advantages he knew how to join those which his money gave him. Always irreproachably dressed, for he did not adopt those fashions which are allowable to a young man but ridiculous at a certain age, M. de Mardeille had a distinguished bearing and the manners of the great world; in fact, although by no means a genius, he had that social wit which is often only the result of a good memory, but which is infinitely more common than natural wit. To all this he added

[1] The de is used by many who are not noble, and so have no right to it.

not a little presumption, and the belief that he was very subtle and keen.

It is almost superfluous to say that this gentleman took the best possible care of his health; for he considered it quite essential to maintain his good looks and to remain as young as possible, which is a very difficult thing to do as age creeps upon us day by day. But then, if one looks young one can try to persuade one's self that one is really so, though, in truth, there is always something in our inner consciousness that makes us remember how old we are; but since that something does not disclose itself we have the right to forget it.

M. de Mardeille, then, took great care of his person; he took baths twice a week, he took laxatives to preserve his fresh complexion, he never went to excess either in eating or drinking. In fact, he was a man who thought only of himself; he had never known what it was to feel a pang of sorrow or regret for a woman, for egotists are not amorous. It was, besides, this gentleman's boast that he had never spent his money on a woman. One does not call it spending money when one takes a lady to dine at a restaurant, or to the theatre, or to drive in the Bois-de-Boulogne; for then, as one shares in the pleasure one's self and at the same time satisfies his vanity in parading his conquest before the eyes of men, the one who pays the money always gets something in return for it. So M. de Mardeille, who up to the present had

found a way to the ladies' favor without its costing anything, laughed at his friends, the greater part of whom ruined themselves or got into debt to satisfy the caprices of the ladies they languished for. Then he would look in the glass as he said,—

"Why the devil don't you do as I do? Never was known the woman who could resist me, and yet I never offer them cashmere shawls or diamonds, still less money. Fie, for shame! And I'm careful not to pay any of their milliner's bills; when one of my dear friends sends some one of her tradespeople to me, one who has a little bill against her, begging me to help her out of her embarrassment by paying it for her, I begin by shutting my door in the tradesman's face; then I cease to visit my fair friend, to whom I write: 'As I find it impossible to oblige you, I dare no longer come to see you.' Then she comes running after me and overwhelms me with marks of affection, as she exclaims: 'So you thought that my love was a matter of interest! It is not so, I love you for yourself alone. Come back to me! come back!' I turn a deaf ear to her for a while, and then I return and there are transports of love. You may be certain of this, gentlemen, that a man isn't loved better for being very gallant and very generous. They are more careful to deceive him — that's all, because they have a desire for his presents and his gifts of money; but what pleasure

is there in having a woman who only loves you for what she can obtain from you?"

"But," answered one of his friends, "you have never known the pleasure of giving, then? You don't know what a charm there is in satisfying a woman's desires, in yielding to her whims and fancies; nor with what a sweet smile she thanks you, whether you bring her a pretty trifle or a rich ornament."

"Hang it! I should think she ought to smile on you on such an occasion; you wouldn't have her make a grimace, would you? But that gracious smile which delights you and charms you is not for you; it is for the jewel or cashmere shawl which you brought her. You thought perhaps that she loved you the better for it. Why, not a bit of it; she would be as ready to deceive you the moment after and make game of you with the friend of her heart, to whom she would laughingly show the present you had just made her. No, messieurs, no; I do not know, nor do I wish to know, what you term the pleasure of giving. For this pleasure would deprive me of all confidence in my mistress; and if I am deceived in her, I can have the satisfaction of saying that the deception was not costly. After all," resumed De Mardeille, "I must confess that I have usually chosen my flames from society, and that in consequence the ladies did not need that I should show myself generous towards them."

"That doesn't prove anything. No matter in what position a woman be placed, she is always flattered at receiving a rich present."

"That is possible; but I feel more greatly flattered when she loves me without my making any."

You know this gentleman now, who lived exactly opposite Georgette, and whose windows, situated on the first floor, permitted him to look down upon the person who occupied the entresol opposite; that entresol being occupied by the little shirtmaker, who, as we have already had the pleasure of telling you, often left her windows open to enjoy the mild spring air and perhaps also to look at her neighbors. When a woman is pretty she does not hide unless she is dominated by a jealous person, and even then she finds a way to show enough of herself to make the beholder desirous of seeing more of her.

M. de Mardeille deigned sometimes to place himself at a window of the dining-room which looked into the court, from whence, enveloped in a very fine dressing gown of velvet or padded cashmere, according to the season, his head covered with an elegant fez, of which the drooping tassel fell gracefully over his left ear, while from under his cap escaped some curly brown hair which he had taken means to prevent from turning white, the gentleman glanced languidly sometimes at those of his neighbors who were worth the

trouble of looking at; but up to this time he had seen nothing in the house which deserved more than passing notice — a mere momentary glance.

When Georgette had first moved in M. de Mardeille's servant had hastened to be the first to tell his master that he had a new neighbor opposite him, adding,—

"She seemed very pleasing to me."

"Oh, she seemed pleasing to you?" answered the gentleman, smiling. "And what sort of a woman is this new tenant?"

"Monsieur, she's a single woman, so it seems, who makes men's shirts."

"A shirtmaker! and you dare to brag about that to me, Frontin?"

M. de Mardeille wished his valet to allow himself to be called Frontin, although his real name was Eustache; but this name of Frontin, which was formerly employed in all the comic operas, recalled to the elegant and seductive De Mardeille a quantity of intrigues, spicy, gallant, diverting, in which Frontin's master was always the victor; and it was probably to reproduce in the world these scenes of the theatre that M. de Mardeille had renamed his man thus; had he dared, he would have called him Figaro, but he was beginning to be rather old to pose as an Almaviva.

Frontin, who was a great booby and thought himself very knowing, smiled as he answered his master,—

"Faith, monsieur, what of that? what if she is only a shirtmaker? I should have thought a pretty girl was always a pretty girl."

"There's some truth in what you say there, Frontin; but as far as I am concerned, you must understand that I look at women with eyes different from yours; that is to say, in order to appear pretty to me it is necessary that a young girl — a grisette even, for I don't absolutely discriminate against grisettes — it is essential, I repeat, that she possess something else besides ordinary beauty which charms you immediately — you others, that is. She must have a — well, I hardly know how to express it; but a certain peculiar charm which we connoisseurs immediately notice, but which the common run of people do not perceive. Let's see, Frontin, what you have noticed as particularly attractive in this young girl? I shall see at once if you recognize the manner of which I speak."

"You want to know what I've noticed, monsieur?"

"Yes. First of all, where have you seen this young girl?"

"Monsieur, I saw her pass this morning; she was crossing the court as I was in the porter's lodge, and he said to me: 'Look! there's our new tenant of the little entresol. That's Mamzelle Georgette, and they say she sews like a fairy!' Naturally, I looked at her and saw a young girl, twenty years old perhaps, who had a very good

figure and most pleasing eyes, very prepossessing; eyes which you — which — "

"Enough, Frontin, I understand what you mean. And what else?"

"What else, monsieur? Mercy! she has a rather snub nose, a well-formed mouth. I saw her teeth when she spoke to the porter, and not one was lacking, monsieur."

"Confound it, if she had gaps in her teeth at twenty, that would be very unfortunate."

"But I meant to say that her teeth are very white, very even — and then her cheeks are so rosy, so fresh!"

"I understand, a beauty of the fields, a rustic; she's probably come from the country."

"No, she doesn't look at all like a peasant — her carriage is too easy for that."

"Well, I shall see her, I shall examine her. I'll cast my eye over her; but I will wager — a toothpick, that this pretty neighbor is but a very commonplace beauty. Does she sit by her window sometimes?"

"Better still, monsieur, she leaves her windows quite wide open, and from here one can look down into her rooms; one can see as far as to the bed in the back of the room."

"Oh, one can see up to her bed, eh? and she leaves her windows open?"

"I presume she closes them when she goes to bed; and she has curtains."

"You rascally Frontin, so you've noticed all that, have you? and so she has curtains! confound it! it would be a pretty thing if she hadn't any. Why, the proprieties would be outraged, Frontin, outraged. Well, I wish very much to see this young girl who seems so pleasing to you, that I may see if you are right."

"I'll bet you'll say the same as I do, monsieur."

Some moments afterwards, Frontin came running to his master and said to him,—

"Monsieur, our young neighbor's windows are wide open, and she is working beside one of them; so you can see her when you please."

M. de Mardeille rose, saying,—

"Well, Frontin, you're devilishly insistent that I shall see your little shirtmaker. But beware! if you've disturbed me for some commonplace little thing you'll deprive me of all confidence in your taste."

Although he gave himself the appearance of going to look at his young neighbor only in compliance with Frontin's desires, he was not sorry to have an opportunity of proving whether she was as good-looking as his servant had declared her to be. M. de Mardeille had always been a great admirer of the fair sex, seeking to please the women had been almost the sole occupation of his life, and for the past few years this occupation had proved very laborious and had taken more

of his time and pains. One must be handsome not to appear more than forty-five at the age of fifty, and there are ladies who think the former too old, and ordinarily they are the ones who are the same age themselves. A middle-aged man finds it much easier to win the heart of a young girl than that of a woman who has lived; wherefore? Why, probably because the one has had more experience than the other.

M. de Mardeille went, therefore, and placed himself at one of his dining-room windows; he assumed a very graceful pose as he leaned on his window-sill; he lightly pushed his fez over his right ear, then he looked up and down the court, as if he was unwilling to allow it to be seen that he had come there to gaze at the new tenant of the entresol.

Presently, however, he negligently glanced in her direction. Georgette was seated beside the window, she was sewing, and from time to time she also looked into the court; it is quite defensible that a young girl should wish to know her neighbors' faces.

M. de Mardeille could thus scan the shirt-maker's features at his ease; and she in turn, when she looked up from her work, could see that her neighbor across the way was watching her; but that did not seem to embarrass her in the least, for it did not prevent her from often raising her head to look out of the window.

"Not bad, not at all bad," muttered M. de Mardeille; "a little snub nose, a fresh complexion, eyes which seem lively enough and rather saucy, but nothing extraordinary; I've seen her like a hundred times over. She's a pleasing young girl, but nothing more; she certainly does not deserve all the eulogies you have showered upon her, my good Frontin."

But Georgette was then seated and this gentleman could not see how slender was her waist, how graceful her carriage. Happily, chance willed — but was it really chance? We would not swear that it was; women divine so easily what will charm us. No matter, put it down that chance gave this young girl the idea of getting up to water a little pot of violets which was placed in her other window.

Then her neighbor opposite could see her coming and going in her room, for one does not at first find all one needs to water flowers, above all when one has no watering-pot. So he saw Mademoiselle Georgette in her dressing-jacket and her little short skirt, he even saw her foot and ankle, for the young girl, always by chance of course, went several times to the back of her room and continued to move about after watering her plants; and M. de Mardeille, who had been disposed to leave his window, stayed there in motionless admiration.

"Why, she's devilishly pretty, is this little one; confound it, what a waist! what a figure! what a

foot! what a leg! Why, she's infinitely better looking than any one I've ever seen. What a dashing walk too. She reminds me of Béranger's song,—

Ma Fretillon! Ma Fretillon!
Cette fille
Qui fretille
N'a pourtant qu'un cotillon!"

Astonished at hearing his master sing, Frontin said to him with a piteous expression,—

"So monsieur doesn't think that the little girl opposite deserves the praises I bestowed upon her?"

M. de Mardeille answered, without leaving his casement and without ceasing to look towards his neighbor's,—

"Chut! chut! do be quiet, Frontin; I know I said that, but then I had not seen her delicate, supple waist, that little black skirt which sets off her graceful form, both of which are charming and well worthy of my admiration; and her foot, she has a charming foot and ankle."

"Oh, I'm glad monsieur sees I was right, and —"

"Be quiet, Frontin, be quiet! She's looking over here!"

In fact, Georgette had raised her head, and her eyes had met those of her neighbor on the first floor opposite. M. de Mardeille hastened to bow graciously to his new neighbor, and she replied by

an inclination of the head and a very amiable smile.

M. de Mardeille then left his window, saying,—

"We won't lavish our attentions too suddenly. But after the way in which this little girl smiled at me, I see I shan't have much trouble in making a conquest of her."

CHAPTER V

The Little Black Skirt Does Its Part. A Box of Candied Fruit

It would have been quite out of accordance with M. de Mardeille's character, and contrary to his usual habit of thought, had he not felt assured that he could add Mademoiselle Georgette to the list of his conquests; but, meanwhile, all the other male tenants of the house tried to find favor in her sight. The fluttering of Georgette's little skirt had turned all these gentlemen's heads.

The young literary men burned the midnight oil to make verses in her honor, to celebrate her charming figure in a song. They were desirous of singing Georgette as Béranger sang Lisette, as all amorous poets have sought to immortalize their mistress and their love. Each of these young fellows believed himself a Virgil, a Catullus, a Tibullus, a Petrarch. There was no harm in this; vanity is credulous and is one of the most common traits in human nature, and in valuing one's self one might as well believe one's self to be a somebody as a nobody; it gives one an immense amount of harmless satisfaction at a very small cost.

The miniature painter was extremely anxious to get the young girl to let him paint her portrait; and the photographer hoped she would allow him to photograph her, both full figure and half length and in any quantity of poses.

The young medical man wished her for a patient, and actually entreated Providence to send his little neighbor a slight indisposition which would oblige her to have recourse to his skill.

The married man, who was so ugly himself and who had such a pretty wife, naturally found the little shirtmaker much better-looking than his spouse. As this gentleman lived above M. de Mardeille, he also had a good view of Georgette's apartments. He placed himself very often at his dining-room window, and from that post of vantage, not content with merely gazing at his neighbor, he also made signs to her and threw her kisses in a very compromising way for a married man. But, then, he knew that his wife was not at all jealous, and that she took very little notice of what he did.

In fact, this fever extended even to the bachelor clerk who had a maid-of-all-work, and who allowed himself, despite the fact that he was considerably over fifty, to make eyes at the pleasing shirtmaker; and as he had no window which faced hers, he was sometimes obliged to lean right out of the window in order to get a glimpse of her. Then the maid-of-all-work would scream to him,—

"Good heavens, monsieur, it's not common-sense to hang out of the window like that! What do you want to look at now? Is it for that little shirtmaker in the entresol that you're willing to throw yourself out of the window? Why, really, the hussy isn't worth the trouble. There's nothing so very marvellous about her; and you'll have given yourself a crick in the neck for nothing, monsieur, for she never so much as looks this way."

Then the old bachelor, extremely angry, but desirous of keeping on good terms with his maid, answered her,—

"Arthémise, you don't know what you are talking about; I'm not looking at anything in particular; I don't glance more to one side than to the other. I merely came to the window because it does me good to get the air, to breathe it freely. I don't busy myself with my neighbors, and did not even know that there was a shirtmaker in the entresol."

"Yes, yes, you may tell that to others," muttered Mademoiselle Arthémise, "you won't catch me like that. Why, all the men in the house are cracked over that young thing; it's easy to see that, for they pass all their time now at their windows."

And, in fact, whenever Georgette had her window open and sat at work beside it one could see a man's head appear almost immediately at the

fourth floor window, then one at the second floor, and so on; sometimes all these gentlemen appeared at the same time, which seemed to give Georgette much amusement, as she demurely responded by a slight movement of her head to the bows which were accorded her from all the stories of the house.

The feminine sex was outraged at the conduct of these gentlemen, for up to that time not one of them had shown himself so anxious to see one of the beauties of the house; it is true there were none in it except the ugly gentleman's wife, and she never appeared at one of the windows which gave on the court. Her bedroom looked on to the boulevard, and the lady believed that she would compromise her dignity by looking out on to the court.

On the other hand, her husband was one of Georgette's most intrepid admirers; one who wished to see her oftenest, and had instituted a system of telegraphic movements to which the shirtmaker did not respond. That did not discourage M. Bistelle, for that was the gentleman's name; he continued to waft kisses to the young girl — who pretended not to see them — to the scandalization of all the other neighbors.

The young staymakers amused themselves at M. Bistelle's expense, and pointed their fingers at him as soon as he appeared at the window. Madame Picotee, the lady who had the secret

beauty spot, would place herself at her window directly her neighbor appeared at his; then she gave way to great shouts of laughter, rather forced, it is true; and every time M. Bistelle wafted a kiss to Georgette she exclaimed,—

"Good heavens! how stupid some men are! but I've never yet seen one so utterly stupid as that one over there. And a married man, too! It's frightful! They ought to rebuild the Bastile expressly for such as he."

M. Bistelle heard all this; but it made no manner of difference to him, and he often muttered to himself,—

"Why, if I had cared to kiss my hand to her, she would have been delighted, she wouldn't have thought it so frightful then."

M. de Mardeille was careful not to act so foolishly as his neighbor of the second floor. He placed himself beside his window to look at Georgette; but, so far from making signs to her and sending her kisses, he contented himself with bowing gravely, and the young girl never failed to respond with a gracious smile.

But as neighbor Bistelle was often at his window just at the moment when Georgette smiled so sweetly as she gently inclined her head to M. de Mardeille, he took to himself what was intended for the occupant of the story beneath him; his hope fed on it, he was delighted, he rubbed his hands, and sometimes came down to walk in the court;

then he would stop under the shirtmaker's windows, humming,—

It is here that Rose doth dwell,

or better still,

When one knows how to love and please,
Needs one any other fortune?

And the staymaker's little apprentices never failed to clap their hands and ask him to do it over again. Madame Picotee one day threw him two sous, which he picked up laughing and put in his pocket, remarking,—

"They'll do to buy me some rouge and some rice powder."

This made the lady of the beauty spot furiously angry, and she ran to get her water jug, and would have thrown its contents over him had she not been stopped by the presence of the porter, who was sweeping the court.

However, Frontin, who saw very well that his master was in love with the young girl of the entresol, informed him of everything that went on in the house, and told him of all the follies which M. Bistelle committed to try to make himself agreeable to Mademoiselle Georgette.

"What! does the ugly fellow hope to win the regard of that pretty grisette?" exclaimed M. de Mardeille. "Why, doesn't he ever look in the glass?"

"I don't know if the gentleman knows how

frightful he is, but I know he flatters himself that he is pleasing to Mademoiselle Georgette. He asserts that she smiles so charmingly only when he is at the window."

"Smiles at him? Why, the young girl smiles at me, not at him. It's impossible that she can be smiling at him. The fool! the monkey! For he's very like a monkey, isn't he Frontin?"

"Yes, monsieur, in looks and in gestures."

"What, does he scratch his head as the monkeys do?"

"My faith, monsieur, he's always making such a strange pantomime that it looks like it. But that is not all."

"What else, Frontin?"

"Well, I happen to know that he sent a very fine bouquet to Mademoiselle Georgette."

"A bouquet! what a fatuous fellow! and he dares? — and this bouquet, did she accept it?"

"Oh, yes, monsieur, it is on her window-sill now."

"Can it be possible? Let us see if that is so."

M. de Mardeille hastened to look out at the shirtmaker's windows; he not only perceived a big bouquet lying on the window-sill, but what was still more distasteful to him, he saw M. Bistelle walking in the court, and humming,—

> If with her I cannot be,
> My bouquet will plead for me.

"Come, come, decidedly I must do something,"

said the well-preserved beau to himself; "I must do something more than show myself at the window. I can't, however, go in broad daylight to this shirtmaker's, that will compromise me. Oh, I have an idea, a pretext already made. Frontin, listen to me for a minute."

"Here I am, monsieur."

"I want you to go at once to Mademoiselle Georgette's —"

"To the pretty neighbor's?"

"Yes; you will go to her very politely, as coming from me. You will tell her that knowing that she is a shirtmaker and requiring some very fine shirts — that's not true, I need none, but to keep up appearances I can order a dozen — you will, I say, tell her that having this work to give her I beg that she will kindly take the trouble to come up to my apartments. You understand; in this way I shall not compromise myself, and I shall be better able to talk to her here than if I went to her house."

"Yes, monsieur, yes; I'll do your commission."

"Be very polite, very respectful; that flatters these young girls."

"Yes, monsieur; and don't you want me to take her a bouquet like that?"

"What nonsense! of what use are bouquets? there is nothing so commonplace. Do you think I wish to resemble M. Bistelle? No, no; noth-

ing of the sort; I have no need of bouquets to assure my success. Go, Frontin; if the young shirtmaker asks at what hour I can receive her, tell her that I leave her entirely free to choose the hour that is most convenient to herself, and that she will be welcome at any time! I hope that's gallant enough, eh? that's worth more than a bouquet."

Frontin went out to execute the commission with which his master had charged him. But the bouquet sent to Georgette by M. Bistelle had been seen by the whole house. Immediately, as though he had put the match to a train of powder, all the aspirants to the young girl's favor said to themselves that they must not be left behind in the race and that the moment had come for them to try to make her acquaintance.

The young scribe whose aspiration it was to be a poet made her a present of a little bunch of violets worth two sous — one is gallant according to his means; but the bouquet was wrapped in a white paper, on which was written this quatrain,—

I saw you pumping, pretty maid,
Devoid of guile, you charm because you're true;
Your movements are so full of grace,
A man would damn himself to pump with you.

The young poet charged the porter to carry his flowers and his verses to the entresol, and requested him to say to the young girl that she must read what was on the paper. A little later the poet's

confrère came with a modest bouquet; but he was a writer of vaudeville rather than a poet, and it was a song that he sent with his flowers. He gave the same instructions to the porter as the one who had preceded him.

Then followed the photographer, who sent a package of photographs of the actors most in repute. Generally, as every one knows, young workwomen have a very pronounced liking for actors, and our photographer did not doubt but that his present would be very agreeable, and charged the porter to say to Mademoiselle Georgette that he would be greatly flattered if she would allow him to photograph her.

Next came the miniature painter, who sent a pretty cardboard box on which he had painted a group of little cupids in very graceful attitudes. In giving his box to the porter the painter said,—

"Do not fail to assure Mademoiselle Georgette that the painter, the author of all these cupids, will esteem himself very fortunate if he may paint his neighbor's portrait; gratis, and in any costume she chooses."

Some moments after the miniature painter, the young doctor also appeared, and put into the porter's hands a package done up in paper, with these instructions,—

"Be kind enough to carry that to Mademoiselle Georgette, from me; it is linden, mallow, and wild poppy, all of which are excellent for a cold,

and one rarely passes an entire year without at least one cold. You will say to this young lady that I desire permission to care for her should she be ill."

Finally, the old bachelor had purchased a box of candied fruits — not through the instrumentality of his maid, we may be sure — and he was careful not to entrust his commission to the porter lest Arthémise should hear of it. He found a little bootblack on the boulevard, and gave him the box, explaining to him where he must carry it; and as he did not wish to remain incognito, for fear his pretty neighbor should attribute his present to another, he charged his messenger to say to the damsel,—

"M. Renardin, your neighbor, sends you this box with his compliments," adding, "Above all, don't stop at the porter's; don't speak to him; go straight to Mademoiselle Georgette's in the entresol. I have paid you; don't take anything from her."

Matters had reached this point when M. de Mardeille sent Frontin to Georgette's. From the first thing in the morning the porter had not ceased to trot between his lodge and the entresol, carrying the presents which had been brought him by one and another. The young shirtmaker accepted everything without making any ado about it; contentedly remarking to the porter on each occasion,—

"Tell the gentleman I thank him."

"Mademoiselle, don't forget to read the verses — there are verses on the paper —" cried the porter, putting the violets into her hand.

"That's all right. I shall read them, but I shall send no answer to anything."

Georgette had read the poet's quatrain and feeling in the humor she now hummed the vaudevillist's verse, which was set to the tune of la Boulangère, laughing heartily as she sang,—

You have a roguish little face,
Your waist is round and slim;
A killing eye, a saucy grace,
A foot and ankle trim;
And 'neath your dainty skirt I trace
A perfect moulded limb;
I vow,
A perfect moulded limb.

Then the porter re-appeared bearing the packet of actors' photographs, and the instant after with the pretty box on which the Loves were painted,

"What more?" cried Georgette. "Why, these gentleman must have agreed among themselves to shower all these attentions upon me to-day."

"My faith, yes, mademoiselle; they're making a line at my lodge, but I don't complain of that; for the matter of that, these young men all mean well, they only want to present their compliments; that's what they told me to say to you."

"I'll accept their little presents, because that keeps up friendly feelings; but I want you to tell

these gentlemen that I will not accept their homage, and that they need not trouble themselves to come here to offer it."

The porter departed, saying to himself,—

"Devil take it! it seems the young girl is virtuous, and these gentleman will gain nothing by their presents. But in spite of that, she accepts everything."

Later on, Georgette received the little packet of herbs sent by the doctor and was giving the usual answer to the porter when M. de Mardeille's valet presented himself at her door.

Frontin bowed to the young girl with the air which persons of his class assume when they think one is much pleased to see them; and when Georgette asked him what he wanted, he answered almost patronizingly,—

"Mademoiselle, I am here on behalf of my master, M. de Mardeille, the gentleman who lives there — opposite you, on the first story, in a three-thousand-franc apartment; he could have a carriage if he wished, he has the means for it; and if he hasn't got it, it's because he doesn't want it."

"That indeed! what next? what does it matter to me that your master has the means to keep a carriage and that his apartment costs him three thousand francs? Did he send you here to tell me that? That would be silly indeed."

Frontin was a little disconcerted at not having

produced more effect; he resumed in a humbler tone,—

"No, mademoiselle, no, my master did not send me to tell you that. But I thought, I believed you would be pleased to have the information; one likes to know with whom one has to deal."

"Say what you have been commissioned to say, that will be much better than making so much talk."

This time Frontin was altogether disconcerted; he had expected to find the young workwoman only too happy to receive a message from his master, and he saw that he had to do with a young girl who appeared to be making game of him. He therefore decided to be very polite and said in a respectful tone,—

"Mademoiselle, my master has some shirts to be made and, knowing that you work at that trade, he begs that you will kindly come to the house to take his order and measure him."

"Monsieur," answered Georgette, in a very decided tone, "you will tell your master that it is not my custom to go to bachelors' houses. If this gentleman were married, if he had a wife in his house, I would readily accept his invitation; there would be no difficulty about doing that, but as he is alone—"

"Mademoiselle, he has a housekeeper and me."

"Domestics don't count. I will not go to your master's house; if he has any orders to give

me he must take the trouble to come to me, and I will receive him — him and his twenty-five-thousand-francs income, with or without a carriage."

Frontin was vexed, first, because the young girl had said that servants did not count; and, second, because she seemed to make light of his master's high position. He answered with a mortified air,—

"Why, mademoiselle, where would be the harm, even if you should come to M. de Mardeille's; you will not be the first. He has visits from ladies, a good many ladies — and real ladies, as I can certify, who don't work for a living."

"Monsieur le valet, you are a stupid. You say nothing but what is stupid."

"What, I'm a stupid, am I? Let me tell you—".

"I have no doubt that your master receives a good many ladies, and it is precisely for that reason that I do not wish to augment the number."

"Why, then —"

"That's enough; you have my answer, go and give it to your master."

Frontin was inclined still to argue the matter, when a great noise in the court drew the attention of all the tenants of the house.

We must remember that Georgette's neighbor, M. Renardin, who kept the maid-of-all-work, had purchased a box of candied fruits and had given them to a little shoeblack to carry to Georgette, carefully pointing out to him that she lodged in the

entresol at the end of the court. But the young lad, who accumulated commissions as he blacked his customers' boots, was a son of Auvergne, and had only sufficient intelligence to black boots or to carry a couple of buckets of water, for the water-bearers are almost all Auvergnats. The little messenger put the box of candy, which was carefully wrapped in white paper and tied with pink ribbon, under his arm. He went with it into the house pointed out to him and, passing defiantly by the porter's lodge, he was about to cross the court when the porter, who had seen the boy pass, issued from his lodge and ran after him and, stopping him in the court, said to him,—

"And where are you going in such a great rush, you little rascal? How dare you come into the court and pass my lodge without saying a word to me? Nobody can come into the house like this —do you hear me, Savoyard?"

"I ain't no Savoyard! I'm an Auvergnat."

"Savoyard or Auvergnat, it's all the same to me; it's exactly the same thing. Where are you going?"

"I didn't speak to you. I'm going about my business."

"You didn't speak to me, I know that well; but I am speaking to you. I'm the porter, I've the right to question you, and you must answer me."

"I'm not to speak to the porter; that's what he ordered me. I'm going straight in."

"You stubborn little street-arab, I tell you that you shan't pass till I know where you are going."

"Then, I tell you I'm going straight in to take this box."

"Where are you going to take it to?"

"I'm not talking to you."

"But I'll make you talk to me. And what's in this box? — deadly explosives, perhaps. If you won't answer me, I'll take you before the commissioner of police."

The porter seized the small boy by the arm; the urchin struggled, wept, and shouted at the top of his voice,—

"Let me go, will yer, you big tief! I'm doing an errand for your neighbor, M. Renardin, and I'll go and tell him you won't let me do it."

Mademoiselle Arthémise, the old bachelor's maid, was crossing the court just at this moment; when she heard her master's name mentioned she stopped, and then came swiftly towards the messenger, saying, —

"M. Renardin, who is asking for M. Renardin? is it this little boy? What is it you want with him?"

"Why, no, he says he comes from him," cried the porter. "Why didn't he say so at first, the little idiot, then I should have let him pass."

"From M. Renardin, he comes from him? In that case, he must be looking for me. M. Renardin must have sent him to me. What do you want with me, my little fellow?"

The young Auvergnat looked at Mademoiselle Arthémise, who was a stout, buxom woman of thirty, with a high color and with down all over her lip and chin, which made her look like a man disguised as a woman.

"Are you Mademoisella Georgetta?" he asked her.

"Mademoiselle Georgette," answered the maid, rolling her eyes furiously, "yes, yes, that's me."

"And do you live in the entresola, there, opposita?"

"Yes, yes; I tell you, that's me — and M. Renardin sent you to fetch this box to Mademoiselle Georgette at the entresol?"

"Yes, it is from your neighbor with his very best compliments, mademoisella."

"Ah, now we shall see what he's sent to this mincing little puss."

Mademoiselle Arthémise had seized the box, and was already tearing the paper off it, when the porter exclaimed,—

"Why, what are you doing? you're taking that box, and you know very well it doesn't belong to you."

"What's that to do with you? What are you meddling for, you miserable porter? Has the little shirtmaker paid you to look after the presents her lovers send?"

"No, mademoiselle, the shirtmaker hasn't paid me; but I must do my duty. If this Savoyard

of an Auvergnat had explained, I should have let him pass to take Mademoiselle Georgette what he was carrying to her."

"Yes, yes; of course, you protect the gallants, that's your business, that's what you're here for."

"My business is to see that the tenants receive what is addressed to them; so you may give me that box, for it doesn't belong to you."

"Catch me at it! candied fruits, apricots, orange, do you see that now? He makes a present of candies like that to that creature, and thinks I needn't put mushrooms in fricasseed fowl, thinks I spend too much money, that I'm not economical. Wait a bit, just you wait a bit! I'll give it to you, with your candied plums and your cherries threaded on straws."

"Once more, Mademoiselle Arthémise, give me that box — you are not Mamzelle Georgette."

The little Auvergnat, who only now began to see his blunder, cried,—

"What! aren't you the young lady of the entresola?"

"It's all right, hold your tongue, you little brat; who's going to notice you. Wait, there's a bit of orange; swallow that, and get out of this."

And Mademoiselle Arthémise thrust a piece of candied orange into the bootblack's mouth. The latter received the fruit and ate it; nevertheless, he wished to get the box into his possession again, and tried with all his might to take it from

M. Renardin's maid; the porter seconded the little messenger's efforts. But the stout Arthémise was a bold, determined hussy, who would have had the strength to struggle with much rougher antagonists than these. She began operations by throwing a piece of quince paste into the little bootblack's face; then seizing a candied apricot, she rammed it into the porter's left eye, who, dismayed by the suddenness of the attack, bellowed that she had blinded him; she followed this up with slaps right and left which she distributed impartially between the pair of them.

The shouts of the porter, the howls of the little Auvergnat, together with Mademoiselle Arthémise's shrieks of laughter, attracted all the tenants to their windows. To increase the scandal, M. Renardin returned home just at this moment; he had been uneasy because his little messenger had failed to return, and he was curious to learn how the little shirtmaker had received his toothsome present.

The precise and timid old bachelor became livid and motionless with fright when he saw the little Auvergnat on all fours in the court, looking for the piece of quince paste; and the porter, who was picking out by morsels the apricot which was glued to his left eye; and his buxom, Amazonian hand-maiden who was roaring with laughter and stuffing herself with choice candied fruits as she said,—

"They're mighty good, all the same. I don't know exactly what this piece is, but I'll make myself a present of it."

"What does this mean, Arthémise? What are you doing in the court instead of attending to your dinner?" said M. Renardin, frowning.

"My dinner; oh, well, that may get along as it can. I'm having a feast, I am. I'm eating candied pears and oranges. Oh, monsieur, when you set out to do it, you make fine presents to the young ladies. But next time you must choose a page who isn't so stupid as that one; he mistook me for that finical miss in the entresol. Mercy! I let him do it. I accepted the box."

"What, you clown! is that the way you execute the commissions with which you are charged?"

"No, monsieur, it wasn't my — my fault; the porter wouldn't let me go in."

"I did my duty; this Savoyard is an idiot, and I was going to send him to the entresol when Mademoiselle Arthémise told him that she was Mademoiselle Georgette, and that the box was for her."

"What, Arthémise, you allowed yourself to—"

"Come, what have I done to make such a to-do about. This urchin brought a box from you, and of course I thought it was for me. How was I going to imagine that a man of your age was still going a-courting young girls? that you were going to spend your money on the first little irregular

face that comes to set itself up in the house? that you would send boxes of sweetmeats to a newcomer, a shirtmaker? while you grumble every day because you say I put a bit too much butter in a sauce — how —"

"That will do, mademoiselle, that is enough; follow me and we will have an explanation upstairs. I don't care for the whole house to know what takes place in my dwelling."

And M. Renardin quickly took his way up the staircase without daring to raise his eyes to the windows of the entresol. Mademoiselle Arthémise followed her master, making horns behind him; she still held the box of candied fruit under her arm and exclaimed as she laughed in the porter's face,—

"I snap my fingers at all of you! I always have good things, and as to monsieur, if he doesn't like porridge he'd better be quiet, or I won't give him anything else to eat for a week."

"Mademoiselle," said the porter, "if my eye is bad, you'll have to pay the doctor."

"Make the best of it, dear friend. You must apply to M. Renardin; he's at the bottom of all this. He's an old flirt, and nothing else."

Georgette had heard all the foregoing from her window and had been much diverted thereby. M. Frontin, who was then on the stairway, had paused on his way down in order not to lose a word of it, that he might report everything to his

master. When there was nobody left in the court, for the little Auvergnat had run off as soon as he had picked up the piece of quince paste, Frontin went into the building by the back way, and so to his master's apartments. There he was about to begin by relating all that had taken place in the court; but M. de Mardeille interrupted him.

"I know all that," said he. "I was at my window. I know that M. Renardin sent a box of dried fruits to the little shirtmaker, and that his maid Arthémise has seized the box and eaten its contents. That Arthémise acts in such a way that her master ought to send her off without notice. But when a man lets himself be ruled by his servant he well deserves that she should make game of him. But all that is of little interest to me; this M. Renardin is not a rival that I need trouble myself about. You've been to the little one's, eh? Well, she must have been flattered, delighted at my proposition. When is she coming?"

Frontin drew himself up and assumed a grave expression, as he answered,—

"Mademoiselle Georgette did not appear at all flattered by monsieur's proposition; on the contrary, she assumed a very high and mighty expression."

"Come, be as short as you can, Frontin."

"In fact, monsieur, this shirtmaker will not come to take your measure for those shirts; do you understand that?"

"I understand that you are an idiot, if that is the way you have done my commission. I never spoke to you about taking a measure."

"Monsieur, I thought that was necessary. When the tailor makes your trousers he always measures you first."

"Enough. And this young girl; what did she say? She did not refuse to give her reasons, did she?"

"Monsieur, she seemed astonished that you weren't married. She said, 'Oh, if your master were married, if he had a wife, that would be different. I would go immediately to take his measure; but I do not go to bachelors' houses. If he wishes to come to my house, I will receive him.'"

"Oh, she wants me to go to her place, does she? You should have told me that at first, simpleton. I understand. That will flatter the damsel's vanity. These girls have so much self-conceit. She wants all the house to know that M. de Mardeille is paying court to her. After all, what care I for all of them put together; I will go, but I will go in the evening, because then it will be dark and the neighbors will not be at their windows."

CHAPTER VI

A Declaration and a Refusal

On the evening of the day on which he had sent his valet Frontin with a message to Georgette M. de Mardeille left his own apartments just as the clock was striking eight.

The night was quite dark, and everything was quiet in the house, for its inmates had either gone out to their evening amusements or were snugly ensconced in the privacy of their own apartments. This gentleman therefore descended his staircase with the utmost precaution, treading as noiselessly as possible, passed the porter's lodge lightly, to avoid being seen by that functionary, hastily crossed the court and went up to the little entresol, in the windows of which he could see a light shining through the curtain.

"In this way," he muttered to himself, "no one will see me go to the little shirtmaker's, and she herself will probably prefer to receive my visit after dark, to save appearances."

By this time M. de Mardeille had reached Mademoiselle Georgette's door and had rapped lightly thereat; after a moment's pause a sweet voice answered,—

"Who is there?"

"Open the door, if you please, Mademoiselle Georgette; I should like to speak to you."

"I do not receive visitors in the evening; come again tomorrow morning."

"Mademoiselle, it is your neighbor over the way, M. de Mardeille — who sent his servant to you this morning. You know what brings me here, will you not admit me?"

"I'm very sorry, monsieur, but in the evening I do not open the door for anybody. Come again tomorrow, when it is light."

"What, mademoiselle, do you mean to say that you would leave me standing here at your door? Me, M. de Mardeille? You know very well who I am, and that I am not a thief."

"You are perhaps more dangerous than a thief. Good evening, monsieur; come tomorrow in the daytime.'

"It's because she's afraid I'll endanger her peace of mind that she refuses to admit me now," said M. de Mardeille, as he went back home.

This idea, which flattered his self-conceit, consoled him a little for his fruitless errand.

"Most assuredly she wishes the whole house to know that I am paying court to her. Well, mademoiselle, since you desire it, you shall have a visit from me in broad daylight."

In fact, the next day, after an hour spent in adorning himself, as he really wished to make him-

self as attractive as possible, M. de Mardeille determined to brave the curious looks of the neighbors. He came down and pretended to be going out, but in passing the porter's lodge said to the man,—

"Does not that young girl who lives in the entresol make shirts?"

"Yes, monsieur, she works for a haberdasher; she sews to perfection — or so they say."

"Well, then, I should like to order some shirts of her. One should always employ his neighbor when he can."

So our elegant gentleman turned on his heel, reached the court, and in an instant found himself before Georgette's door; the little shirtmaker, according to habit, had left her key outside the door during the daytime.

M. de Mardeille gave two little raps.

"Come in, the key is on the outside of the door,"[1] answered the same voice as had spoken to him the evening before.

The gentleman entered the young girl's abode with that ease which bespeaks a man of the world, and with that lack of ceremony which a rich man always permits himself when visiting poor people; at least, except when the aforesaid rich man has a certain good feeling and tact, when, so far from wishing to impress others by his superiority of

[1] In Parisian houses the doors are opened by turning the key; they are rarely provided with handle catches.

position, he rather seeks to make them forget it. But men of good feeling and tact are rare, and these two qualities were lacking in Georgette's neighbor.

However, that gentleman laid aside a part of his hauteur when he saw the ease with which the young girl received him. She did not seem at all put out by his visit, but offered him a seat very graciously, and without ceremony immediately resumed her own, which was beside the window.

"Permit me to ask, monsieur," said she, "what has procured me the honor of this visit."

M. de Mardeille sank languidly back in his chair, and answered smilingly,—

"Mademoiselle, I sent my valet yesterday to you, asking you to come to my house — not a very great distance off, for I live just opposite."

"I know it, monsieur; I place you perfectly. But your servant must have told you — "

"That you would not come to a bachelor's house — yes, he told me that. But, deuce take it! what is the reason that bachelors inspire you with this terror. You have some grudge against them, have you? Ha, ha, ha! Do you know that that might give rise to a great many suppositions."

And the gentleman laughed again, because he had fine teeth, which it pleased him to put in evidence, and also because he thought it very witty to laugh thus. But Georgette was impassivity itself, and answered coldly,—

"Monsieur, I cannot imagine what suppositions people might make; but I acted as I did because it suited me, and I care very little for what any one may think."

M. de Mardeille, quite surprised at the young girl's serious tone, laughed affectedly at first, and then decided not to laugh at all. He balanced himself back in his chair as he answered,—

"I had no intention of offending you. The deuce! it seems that one may not joke with you."

"Pardon me, monsieur, I am quite willing to joke with people whom I know."

"Oh, that's enough; and as yet you only know me by sight. As for me, mademoiselle, I am delighted to have so charming a neighbor as yourself living opposite to me, and it gave me an immediate desire to — to become intimately acquainted with you, in short."

"I thank you, monsieur, but there is too great a difference of position between us."

"The distance may be eliminated; that is to say, it may be very speedily overleaped when it is a question of a pretty woman and a man who is fascinated by her charms."

Georgette smiled.

"Was it to tell me that that you came here, monsieur?" she asked.

"Why, yes, it was. Listen to me, I don't take a roundabout way, I would much rather come straight to the point; and besides, why should I

hide the impression that your grace, your gentleness, have made on my heart? Is it a crime to love you? especially as I am a bachelor, and there is no reason why you should repulse my attentions. Yes, charming neighbor, you have completely turned my head; since I first saw you in the simple costume that becomes you so well I have not had a moment's peace, I think only of you. I made a pretext of needing some shirts to get you to come to my rooms; but what I really wanted — what I desired before everything — was to declare my love for you, and to entreat you not to be insensible to it."

It was now Georgette's turn to break into a peal of laughter; and she did it so frankly, so heartily, that the fine gentleman who was leaning towards her drew back and seemed quite put out. As the pretty shirtmaker continued to laugh, at length he said to her,—

"Confound it! mademoiselle, I am delighted to see you so gay; but will you not inform me as to the cause of your laughter? Surely, it cannot be the avowal of my sentiment which affords you amusement. You must be used to receiving like declarations; as far as I can see, all the men in the house have told you, or would like to tell you, the same."

"Oh, and how do you know that, monsieur?"

"Did I not see the porter pass the whole of yesterday in carrying you bouquets, photographs,

I know not what all? There was even talk of a box of candied fruit. Ha, ha, that episode was really too funny."

"Well, I must say all the gentlemen in the house have been very polite to me."

"Faith, mademoiselle, I don't care to send bouquets; I think that so common, so vulgar, that I don't care to imitate those gentlemen. I prefer to speak myself, to say frankly in words what I feel. Don't you think that is of more real value?"

"Why, it seems very nice to me to get bouquets, presents."

M. de Mardeille compressed his lips as he said to himself,—

"She likes little presents — she's not at all disinterested, which is very vexatious!"

This did not prevent his drawing his chair closer to Georgette, and trying to make his voice very tender, very touching, as he murmured,—

"But you have not responded to my declaration, dearest of girls."

"Excuse me, didn't you hear me laughing?"

"What, is that your way of answering? What am I to conclude from such a reply as that?"

"That I took your declaration at its true value; that is to say, as a huge joke."

"A joke, oh, don't imagine it for a moment! I meant what I said quite seriously, I love you! I adore you!"

"Were you taken that way all at once, because you saw me at my window?"

"Are weeks, months, necessary in order to fall in love? One sees a woman who is pleasing to one; one is attracted at once or not at all. Is not love electrical in its nature?"

"Oh, I don't know that—"

"Why, certainly it is; a pretty woman's eye contains a fluid that electrifies us of the other sex. From the moment we feel its influence we are undone, electrified!"

"Really, and are women affected in the same way? What electrifies them?"

"Why, the same thing, the looks we give them."

As he said this, the gentleman who wished to electrify the young girl fixed his eyes ardently upon her and again tried to draw his chair nearer to hers, but Georgette drew away her own, and said to him in a very dry tone,—

"Monsieur, do not come so near me, I beg of you, it embarrasses me at my work; and besides, it is not proper."

The fine gentleman was astounded, he thought that his eyes had not darted enough fire, and tried to make them still more inflammable in order to catch the tinder of her heart.

"Is it not allowable to approach you?" he said to her reproachfully, "to admire that divine figure nearer?"

"No, monsieur, it is distinctly not allowable;

and what would the neighbors think if they should see you beside me like that?"

"The neighbors! hang the neighbors! but why do you leave your windows wide open? It's very inconvenient to talk to you; if you'll allow me, I will go and close them."

"No, monsieur, no; on the contrary, I wish that they should remain open — they don't interfere with my talking at all; and if the neighbors know that you have come into my apartments —"

"What a singular idea to submit thus to the inspection of your neighbors, at whom you should laugh, after all."

"Oh, and don't you think that they too can laugh at other people?"

"I think — I think that you are very severe with me."

"And I, monsieur, think that I have done you a great favor in consenting to receive you in my apartment, where I have received no other man. You don't appear very grateful for it."

"Pardon me, my pretty neighbor, really I am very conscious of the honor you have done me — but I believed, I hoped. In truth, you haven't as yet told me if my sentiments are pleasing to you."

"Why, monsieur, I am hardly acquainted with you, and possibly I do not allow myself to be so easily electrified as do you."

"Mischief! you are playing with my torments."

"You say you love me, monsieur, but why should I believe in your love? What proofs of it have you given me?"

"What proofs? What, mademoiselle, are proofs necessary for you to believe in it?"

"Assuredly. Oh, I am very incredulous, and I never believe anything without proof."

"Why, mademoiselle, it seems to me that the step I have taken at this present moment ought to have proved to you already that I am telling you the truth. For a man of my rank, a man who moves only in the highest circles of society, to pay a visit to — a simple workwoman, he must necessarily be urged to it by a very ardent feeling."

"That is to say, monsieur, that you think you are conferring a great honor upon me in coming to see me?"

"Why no, I don't say that. Really, you are very malicious, you misconstrue every word I say."

Georgette did not answer; she continued to work. M. de Mardeille, greatly vexed at having made so much less progress than he had hoped to make in his wooing, said to himself,—

"Let's change the conversation a bit. This little girl ought to like pleasure — all women love to amuse themselves," and after a moment he resumed,—

"Have you been working for a long time thus — for a haberdasher?"

"Why, no, monsieur; in the first place, I haven't been in Paris very long."

"Ah, you are not a Parisian then? You surprise me, for you have all the grace of one; shall I be guilty of an indiscretion if I ask what part of the country you are from?"

Georgette hesitated a moment and then replied,—

"I come from a little village near Rouen."

"So you're a Norman? It's very singular that you have none of the accent. And how long have you been in Paris?"

"Nearly five months."

"And you came here alone?"

"Yes, all alone. I said to my parents, 'I want to go to Paris; I shall work there, and who knows, perhaps I shall make my fortune.'"

M. de Mardeille scratched his nose as he repeated,—

"Make a fortune! hum, that's a difficult thing to do. Women hardly make fortunes in Paris by means of their needles alone. But in coming to Paris you probably knew that you could find a friend — a rich protector, who could immediately put you in the way to realize that fortune for which you are ambitious?"

Georgette answered rather dryly,—

"No, monsieur, I did not come to find a protector in Paris; and I know very well myself how to arrive at the end I have in view."

The fine gentleman compressed his lips again and looked around the room,—

"One doesn't know," he mused, "what to be at with this little girl, she's so very sharp, so very much on her guard. The siege won't be as short as I had thought. But it matters little, I have time. I must find her weak spot."

"Mademoiselle, are you fond of the theatre?"

"Yes, indeed, monsieur, very fond."

"Do you go there often?"

"Hardly ever, monsieur. In the first place, I have no acquaintances in Paris, and to go to the play alone would scarcely be proper for a young girl."

"I have found the flaw in her shield," said Mardeille to himself, then he resumed,—

"Well, my charming neighbor, if you will consent I will take you to the theatre; we'll have a private box. Then one may be as comfortable as if in his own room."

"I don't know anything about your private boxes, monsieur; but when I go to the play, I don't go to conceal myself, I like to see and be seen."

"Oh, you like to be seen, what a coquette you are!"

"It's not because I am a coquette; in fact, monsieur, you must be aware that I can't go to the play with such a fashionable man as you in the simple dress I wear."

"I did not suppose you would go with that dressing-jacket and that little skirt, although the costume is divinely becoming to you; oh, you are delightful thus!"

"No, of course I shouldn't go in a dressing-jacket, but my dress is very modest; a linen gown, a little cap, a knitted fichu — that is my best."

"What, you haven't a bonnet, a modest little bonnet?"

"No, monsieur, I have not."

The fine gentleman rocked back and forth, balancing himself on his chair; he seemed to be reflecting, and at length he said,—

"After all, you must look charming in a cap. Besides, we can take a cab. Is it so settled? I will call for you this evening and take you if you will consent to it."

"What, monsieur, you will take a woman to the theatre in a cap, a holland gown and a knitted cape instead of a shawl?"

"Exactly so; I am exempt from prejudices. I should like to take you as you are now, if that were possible."

"Well, did you ever! I shouldn't have believed it!"

"That will prove to you, I hope, how much I love you."

"Why, no, that doesn't prove anything to me at all. And as to that, monsieur, I have more self-respect than you have, and I have enough

respect for your position to prevent me from wishing to compromise it. Fie! for shame! what would be thought of you, monsieur, if people were to see you squiring a woman in a cap?"

"Then, we'll take a cab."

"We can't go into the theatre in a cab. Ha, ha, ha! And as I have no desire to hide myself in a private box, when once we are in the theatre they'll have full time to admire my toilet."

M. de Mardeille rose and for a few moments walked about the room in silence; at length he exclaimed,—

"What would be necessary for you that you may come to the play with me, my pretty maid?"

"Why, nearly everything: a silk dress, they make such pretty gowns now, one could easily find one ready-made that would fit my figure; yes, and a pretty bonnet, a handsome shawl, cashmere or something almost as nice; and some gloves, pretty kid gloves."

M. de Mardeille began to walk up and down, hardly able to hide the grimace that had replaced his pleasant expression, then suddenly looking into the court he exclaimed,—

"I think some visitors are coming to my place. Yes, yes, they are coming to me. Good-day, my charming neighbor, pardon me a thousand times for my abrupt departure."

"Pray don't trouble yourself about that, monsieur."

Our exquisite had reached the door as he spoke; he quickly went up to his apartment, which he entered looking very much out of temper; and when Frontin said,—

"Did the little shirtmaker take monsieur's measure?"

He answered angrily,—

"Be quiet, idiot! I forbid you ever to speak to me of that little grisette."

CHAPTER VII

Love as Long as it Lasts. A Brooch

A week had gone by during which M. de Mardeille had not been to see Georgette again, nor had he ostentatiously placed himself at the windows which gave on to the court; but he had several times slyly peeped through the panes, softly lifting a corner of the curtain to do so. He had been rewarded by seeing his young neighbor coming and going about her modest apartments, just as nimble, as spruce, as graceful as ever. Then, when all was in order, she would station herself with her work at the window, ever and anon rising to attend to some trifling household matter, after which she would resume her seat and her needlework.

Each movement of the pretty shirtmaker made his heart bound; and on one occasion he had kicked Frontin for being impudent enough to laugh when he saw his master raise the curtain. However, it had flattered and pleased M. de Mardeille not a little to observe that although Mademoiselle Georgette responded amiably to the salutations of her other neighbors, she had not as yet admitted a single one of them to her rooms;

so that she had really conferred a favor upon him in consenting to receive him.

A week passed and M. de Mardeille thus communed with himself,—

"After all, was it not for my sake, and that she might do me no discredit, that the girl wished to be properly dressed to go out with me? I can't bear a grudge against her for that; her motive is very excusable, and I really must send her what is necessary for such an occasion, although it is contrary to my usual custom. I have never spent anything on women — and to begin now; of course, just once in a way is all very well, I'm not going to make a habit of it; it annoys me though. This little girl has some stubbornness, some strength of mind; if I don't send her what she wants, I may as well give her up altogether, and I have no desire to do that. I dream of her by night, I see her lissome waist and the graceful form which her little black skirt sets off so well. Come, I shall have to buy these things, but I shan't go so far as to buy a cashmere shawl, I'm not such a simpleton as that; though if a man wishes to play the gallant he must do things suitably; this changing one's habits at my age is very disagreeable. Why the devil did this taking little grisette come to lodge in this house, opposite me, right under my nose? It's a fatality."

Love and self-conceit, the latter being even stronger in this gentleman's composition than the

former, at length carried the day. One morning Georgette received the shawl, the bonnet, the gown, and the kid gloves, with these few words written by her elegant neighbor,—

"Now, will you come with me this evening to the theatre?"

And Georgette gave her answer to the messenger,—

"Yes, I will go."

For M. de Mardeille, who did not wish anyone to know that he had been to any expense to please the shirtmaker, had not made use of Frontin in sending his present to her.

That evening, on the stroke of seven, the fine gentleman presented himself to Georgette, who was all ready, and who was probably less seductive in her new finery than in her morning-jacket and little skirt, but who was still very good to look at, because a young and pleasing woman could not be ugly in a fashionable bonnet. M. de Mardeille himself was surprised at the ease with which his little neighbor wore her new toilet.

"Upon my word," he exclaimed, "you are charming in that gown and bonnet, you wear them with so much grace."

"Does that surprise you, monsieur?"

"Nothing astonishes me on your part; I believe there is nothing to which you might not aspire."

"I am ready, shall we start?"

"Oh, we are full early; give me a few moments that I may admire you."

"You can admire me at the theatre to your heart's content; but as I don't go often to the play, I wish to see the whole of it, so let's start."

Georgette had reached the landing as she spoke, and M. de Mardeille followed her, muttering to himself,—

"She is a little headstrong, it doesn't do to oppose her; but this evening as we come back from the theatre I flatter myself that she won't get rid of me so quickly."

It was still daylight when Georgette went forth from her modest lodging, stylishly dressed and leaning on M. de Mardeille's arm. All the neighbors were at their windows; and needless to say their tongues were all wagging.

"It's that old dandy who's taking her out; he's rich, he's fashionable, and that entices a young girl, whose self-conceit is flattered when a swell like that gives her his arm."

"And then he is still very good-looking, is this gentleman," said the miniature painter. "I conceive that he knew how to please the little thing. These young girls have a most astonishing taste for a well-built man."

"The Lovelace of the first floor has been to some expense, he has dressed our little neighbor from head to foot. These women allow themselves to be captivated through their love of dress."

"And we poor literary beggars can't offer her anything of the sort."

"It's very singular, because this De Mardeille has the reputation of being very close with women."

"That's a rumor he's set afloat to make believe that he is loved for himself alone."

The young doctor said nothing out loud, but he sighed and to himself he muttered,—

"She hasn't even had a cold."

M. Bistelle was furious, for she had received his bouquets but would not receive him; and she had refused all his propositions, which, however, had been very audacious. So when he saw the girl passing in her new attire he said to himself,—

"Why, that's niggardly, that is! Why that shawl isn't a cashmere, it isn't even a Lyons shawl; that gown is but poor flimsy silk; the bonnet isn't from one of our first milliners; it's all trashy, you can see that at a glance. I should have dressed the little thing a hundred times better. She was foolish to prefer De Mardeille to me, for he has never been generous to women."

This gentleman, needless to say, was very ugly, while his rival was still good-looking. But these are amongst the things that one never says to himself. Besides, one gets so used to one's own face during the course of life that it never seems ugly to him.

In fact, there was no one, up to the old bachelor,

M. Renardin, who did not pout very decidedly on seeing Georgette pass; the old clerk, in fact, pouted more than some of the others because his maid, Mademoiselle Arthémise, took the opportunity of saying to him, jeeringly,—

"See your flame there, going out arm-in-arm with the lady-killer of the first floor. Much good it does you to send boxes of candied fruit to such damsels as that! She's quite right to make game of you."

"In the first place, Arthémise, you are talking foolishly; that girl did not receive candied fruit from me, for the simple reason that you ate it yourself."

"God be thanked, I was there to stop it on its way, or she would have received it. You see now, it's very lucky I did eat it. You don't suppose, now, that this mincing miss would have put the box on her head to go out with you, do you? Oh, she's a sly jade, she's fleecing the would-be-young man of the first floor. She's right, too, for they say he's a mean curmudgeon with women; and it's only what he deserves."

M. de Mardeille had taken Georgette to the Ambigu-Comique. He had wished to occupy a snug little box with her, but she had refused to go into it and the gentleman had been obliged to take her into the balcony, where he was perforce compelled to conduct himself in the most strictly conventional manner. As a set-off against this

he was constantly pouring into her ear avowals of his passion for her until, at last, she said to him, impatiently,—

"Please be kind enough to stop talking, you prevent me from hearing the play, and I supposed that was what I came for."

M. de Mardeille bit his lips.

"There is," he said to himself, "nothing in the world so stupid as a young girl who goes to the play for the first time. I shan't take her there often, I can tell you."

The piece amused Georgette very much; while on the other hand it bored her squire to extinction and he saw it end with joy. He wanted to take a cab home; but the young girl absolutely refused to do anything but walk.

"But the rain is falling in great drops," said M. de Mardeille.

"Well, that will refresh us."

"But your bonnet is fresh and new, and it will be ruined, spoiled."

"That'll be a great misfortune! There are plenty more bonnets in the milliner's shops."

"Does she think I'm going to buy her a bonnet every day?" said her companion to himself; he could hardly restrain his anger at being compelled to return home on foot, with Georgette on his arm; and she, during the whole walk, would talk of nothing but the piece she had seen and the actors who had played in it.

At length they had reached home, and now M. de Mardeille was impatiently expectant of receiving the reward of his not altogether too pleasant evening. They entered the house and drew near the porter's lodge, which was at the foot of the staircase leading to the first floor dwelling.[1] Georgette stopped and curtseyed graciously to her squire.

"Good evening, monsieur," she said, "and a thousand thanks for the pleasure you have given me in taking me to the theatre."

"What do you mean by saying good evening so soon," exclaimed M. de Mardeille with a smile. "Why, I am not going to bed yet, and you will surely allow me to come and have a little chat with you."

"But I am going to bed, monsieur, and this is hardly the time for a chat."

"Why, you are not going to bed yet, surely. It's quite early, and you won't be keeping your lady's maid up to take off your finery."

"Hardly!" laughed Georgette, "nevertheless, I must leave you here and now, so good-night again, monsieur."

"Why, what does this mean? You must be joking, my charming neighbor, are you not willing to receive a little visit from me?"

"Tomorrow, monsieur, tomorrow; during the

[1] These Paris houses which are built around a court ordinarily have four staircases, one for each wing.

daytime, I shall be very glad to see you if it pleases you to come — but at the present time it would be very improper."

As she said these words, with a slight bow, Georgette quickly darted up her little staircase to the entresol. M. de Mardeille remained as if stunned in front of the porter's lodge, overcome by the conduct of the young girl.

"This is a little bit too much," he grumbled to himself, "she accepts my presents, a whole outfit — which I must say has cost me dear enough — and she has shown herself as intractable as she did before I gave them. She's making game of me, it seems, is this damsel."

Then suddenly perceiving the porter, who was observing from his lodge what was taking place outside, the court and the staircase being still lighted, our dandy struck his forehead impatiently.

"Idiot that I am," he said to himself, "I ought to have understood. This little thing has a hundred times more tact than I have. She naturally did not wish the porter to see me going to her rooms at midnight, for he would not fail to let everybody in the house know that I passed the night at my neighbor's. Yes, yes, and in that she was quite right. She has clearly pointed out my line of conduct. I must go up to my rooms and pretend to go to bed; then, when everybody is asleep and the gas is extinguished, I must come down again very softly and go over to the little

one's, who will be certain to leave her key outside the door. There's the way all laid out, I have only to follow it."

M. de Mardeille went up his own staircase, expressly making a good deal of noise with his feet. He went into his apartments, closing the door noisily after him, and when Frontin had attended to the duties of his toilet he sent him away, telling him to go to bed immediately. Half an hour passed, the gas was now extinguished, and all was still in the house; there was no light at any of the neighbors', not even at Georgette's, and M. de Mardeille remarked to himself,—

"That young girl remembers everything; she is prudence itself. She has even put out her light. Very good, darkness renders one more daring. I must hasten, for the shepherd's hour has struck."

The gentleman very softly left his rooms, first enveloping himself in a vast dressing-gown and putting his gay smoking-cap on his head; he groped his way downstairs, being careful to make no noise; he passed lightly by the porter's lodge, in which the lights were extinguished; everywhere darkness reigned, and in trying to grope his way across the court our gallant bumped his nose on the pump; but this served him as a compass, as the door of Georgette's little staircase was close by; he found it and went slowly up, muttering,—

"Here I am at last!"

In fact, he had reached Georgette's door, where

he searchingly groped for the key; but, contrary to his expectations, it was not in the lock, and the door was shut fast.

"She didn't think to leave the key outside," said M. de Mardeille; "she must have forgotten it. Perhaps that was modesty, so as not to seem to be expecting me? I must let her know, however, that I am here; I must knock very softly. She can't be asleep."

He knocked softly, two little raps, then a much louder one.

"Come now, she doesn't hear me," he muttered. "Can she be gone to sleep already? It's very strange — there's no other noise in the house, she ought to hear me. Well, so much the worse, I must awaken her, and if others hear me it will be her fault."

M. de Mardeille knocked much louder, then louder still, then louder and longer still, and shouted through the door,—

"Little neighbor, it's me, open the door for a minute, won't you? I have forgotten something that I left in your rooms. Charming Georgette, it's really enough to drive me mad! You are a most provoking little thing! Come, you must open the door to me, I have some very interesting things to tell you. Please, just long enough for me to say two words to you; then I will leave you."

His trouble and his prayers were useless, no one

answered him, and the door did not open. After waiting for about three-quarters of an hour, the discomfited gallant angrily pulled his smoking-cap down over his forehead and went down the entresol stairs, bumping himself against the walls in the dark.

To increase his chagrin, when he reached the court he heard shrieks of laughter coming from several windows, and he recognized Mademoiselle Arthémise's voice, for she was shouting as loud as she could,—

"Why, that was well done, indeed. She's outwitted that walking scent-bottle. The little girl makes game of her lovers, and that reconciles me to her. Ha, ha! it's a case of singing:—

My candle's gone out,
And so is my fire;
Won't you open your door?
It is all I desire."

M. de Mardeille had not closed his eyes during the whole night. He was horribly vexed and awaited the morrow impatiently, that he might have an explanation with the little shirtmaker, whom he intended to reproach sharply. He considered that he had the right to do so, because he asserted that in love it ought to be give and take, and therefore one gives nothing without expecting something in return.

Day broke at last, people were going and coming about the house. Our dandy rose. His first

act was to look in his glass, and he found he was frightfully pale, his eyes were red, he looked terribly tired; and as of all things this gentleman wished to look young and handsome, he passed more than an hour in the adornment of his person, changing his cravat and his waistcoat several times without succeeding in finding anything that would restore his ordinary fresh look. At length, wearied by his efforts, he gave it up.

"A certain degree of pallor makes one look interesting," he said to himself; "women rather like a melancholy-looking man. This hard-hearted little girl may perhaps be touched by my looks of suffering. Decidedly, it's a good thing that I am a little pale — it is very suitable under the circumstances."

M. de Mardeille then went over to his little neighbor's, crossing the court as quickly as possible to avoid the neighbors' curious looks. This time the key was in the door, and he entered the room brusquely. Georgette, who was seated at her work, smiled rather saucily when she saw him.

"Good-day, monsieur," she said, "it is very kind of you to come and see me. Sit down, will you not? and we'll talk about the play we saw yesterday."

But M. de Mardeille, declining the offer of a chair, walked agitatedly about the room and answered irritably,—

"Mademoiselle, I did not come here to talk about the play."

"Indeed! Well, then, we'll talk about something else."

"Mademoiselle, you sleep very sound."

"Oh, no, you are quite mistaken as to that; I am a very light sleeper — the slightest sound awakens me."

"The slightest sound! how is it then that you did not hear me last night at your door, where I knocked for more than half an hour without your deigning to answer me?"

"Yesterday? Oh, I heard you plainly enough, monsieur; too plainly, indeed."

"Then, mademoiselle, why did you not open the door to me?"

"Why? Well, monsieur, because it didn't suit me to do so, because I'm not in the habit of receiving visitors at midnight; and because I think that the rumpus you made at my door was highly improper."

"The rumpus! But if you had opened the door at first I should not have made a rumpus, as you call it."

"Yes, and when I did not choose to open the door, you should not have gone on knocking."

"Why, mademoiselle, it seemed to me that I had the right to come and see you — that I had a right to expect a kindly reception. When a woman receives presents from a man she ought to treat him well, and not leave him unanswered at the door when he calls to see her."

"The right! the right!" cried Georgette, rising and darting such an angry look at De Mardeille that he was stunned by it. "I would have you know that I consider you very impertinent, and I ought to send you right out of my room and forbid you ever to set your foot here again. The right! What do you mean by that, monsieur? Is it because you sent me some trifling articles of dress that you allow yourself to talk in this fashion? I would have you know, monsieur, that I did you a great honor in accepting your superb presents. If you had not wanted me to go out with you, no doubt you would not have made them. So then, it was rather to satisfy your vanity than to please me that you sent me those things; and since you imagine that I was going, because of them, to open my door to you at midnight, you perhaps had other ideas of me which were still worse;— why, monsieur, you are mad! Here, take your presents. Oh, I don't want to keep them, you may take them all back. Wait. This will show you how much I think of them."

So saying, Georgette ran to her wardrobe and took therefrom the gown, the shawl, and the bonnet, threw them all on the ground, and kicked them towards M. de Mardeille, who was terrified and dared not stir.

When she had done this, Georgette returned to her seat beside the window, which was open as usual, and took up her sewing again without

seeming to notice that her neighbor was still there, standing stock still, like a post.

Some minutes passed thus. The fine gentleman had had time for reflection, and he began by picking up the bonnet, the gown, and the shawl and putting them all on the nearest piece of furniture; then he came towards Georgette and stammered in much confusion,—

"Mademoiselle, I was wrong, I was very wrong, I am convinced of it."

"It's fortunate that you perceive it, monsieur."

"I should not have thought — or rather, I should not have hoped to — and I certainly did not intend to set a price on the trifle I sent you. It wasn't that that made me come and knock at your door last night, but I thought you had been touched by my feeling for you, that you no longer doubted its sincerity — that is what urged me to come and knock here yesterday evening after the play. Pray, pray forgive me, my dear neighbor; don't be angry with me, for that would make me too unhappy."

Georgette smiled, as she answered,—

"Since you realize that you were in the wrong I will forgive you. Oh, I am not one to bear a grudge. I say what I think on the spur of the moment; and after that I think no more about it."

The fine gentleman took the young girl's hand and carried it respectfully to his lips. She withdrew it and said, as she pointed to a chair,—

"Now, sit down and let us talk of something else."

"Something else!" said M. de Mardeille, in a low tone, "It is difficult for me to refrain from speaking of my love when I am near you — does that cause you annoyance?"

"No; but have you forgotten what I have already told you?"

"By Jove! possibly I have; what did you say to me on this subject?"

"I told you I did not believe in any man's love until he had given me proofs of it."

"Yes, that is true; I remember now — proofs. Only I do not fully understand what you mean by that."

"Oh, monsieur, I think I should be doing you an injustice in explaining myself further," answered Georgette mockingly. "So much the worse for you if you do not understand me."

"And did you enjoy the play, yesterday?" inquired M. de Mardeille, hastening to change the subject.

"Yes, monsieur, very much indeed; I should go there very often if I had the means to do so."

"But if some one takes you that's the same thing, isn't it?"

"No, it is not the same thing to be able to go when one pleases one's self as to go only when it pleases others to invite one."

"Well, my pretty neighbor, whenever it pleases

you to go again I am entirely at your orders, and I shall be delighted to escort you at any time."

"You are only too kind, monsieur. Did you notice yesterday in the theatre that lady in pink who was in one of the stage boxes?"

"In a box in the proscenium?"

"I don't know whether they call it the proscenium, but it was a lady who wore a kind of diadem of flowers; and she was very, very pretty."

"Why, yes, I remember, a beautiful fair woman — that is Irma, a fashionable beauty."

"Do you know her?"

"Yes, as one knows a good many of those ladies one meets at all the Casino balls; at all the first nights at the play; at all the entertainments, in fact, where one gains admission by payment."

"Is that lady married?"

"Married! No; she is a gay woman."

"Oh, she's a gay woman — well, any way, she was very richly dressed. She had a magnificent diamond collarette and brooch; for they were diamonds, were they not, monsieur?"

"They were — or at least, they looked like it; they might, however, be false. Now, they make imitation diamonds so like real ones that anybody is liable to be deceived; they are quite as pretty, and some of them even show off better, owing to the manner in which they are set."

"What, false diamonds! horrors! You'd never get me to wear anything false!"

M. de Mardeille looked at his watch, then he rose, saying,—

"How quickly time passes when I am with you, charming Georgette. But I have an appointment at my banker's and I have only just time to get there. Good-by for the present, my dear neighbor. You are no longer displeased with me, that is settled, isn't it?"

"No, I am not angry now, monsieur; that is all past and gone, and forgotten."

The fine gentleman bowed and left the young girl.

"She's forgotten all that's passed," said he to himself, doubtfully, as he went down the stairs. "Consequently, she has entirely forgotten that I've given her a complete outfit. And here just now she was talking to me of diamonds; but come now, that's altogether too strong. This little girl is exorbitant in her demands. Does she expect to be decked out like Irma? I can't imagine such a thing,— a shirtmaker who desires diamonds! I never expected to find a grisette so difficult to please — it's the first time it ever happened to me. She speaks to me with so much self-assurance. She is no fool — and the worst of it is that when she becomes animated her eyes sparkle so — have such an expression, that she looks quite ravishing — she's a little demon. But give her diamonds I won't; no, never, never, I would much rather swallow them."

Several weeks passed. M. de Mardeille still made his diurnal visits to Georgette, who received him as usual and kept her windows open whenever he came. But the gentleman made not the smallest progress in his wooing. When he tried to seat himself near the young girl, the latter obliged him to draw his chair away; if he took her hand, she withdrew it, and if he snatched at her skirt as she passed, hoping to pass his arm around her slender waist, she would push him forcibly away, and putting on a severe look would exclaim,—

"I do not allow any one to touch me in that way — it is entirely forbidden."

Then this ardent swain would heave great sighs, to which she would reply with shouts of laughter and saucy looks that made her still prettier; for while strictly holding her neighbor within respectful bounds, Mademoiselle Georgette was highly skilled in employing the whole battery of coquetries which involve a man still more deeply in the meshes of love and end in making him lose his head.

So it came about that at the end of this time as he one day left Georgette, who had been going back and forth in her room arrayed in her bewitching costume, M. de Mardeille exclaimed,—

"Come, there's no way of evading it, I must send her a little brooch set with diamonds — rose diamonds — something that doesn't cost too much;

it must, however, be pretty or else, if I know the damsel, she will be quite capable of making fun of me. Oh, these women! — and I who have never spent a sou on them to come to this — this little one has upset all my habits and I'm just as foolish now as other men in the same case."

The next day when he appeared at his neighbor's, M. de Mardeille was cheerful, amiable, almost giddy; one would have thought he was a young man of twenty years. When he had seated himself as near Georgette as he dared, he drew from his pocket a little cardboard box and presented it to her.

"Permit me, my charming girl," said he, "to offer you this pledge, this proof of my love, and be assured that in offering it I do not imagine that it gives me the least claim on your affection, I wish that to be entirely spontaneous."

"Come now, that is a very pretty speech, indeed," answered Georgette, who hastily opened the box and disclosed a little brooch which might be worth eight or nine hundred francs and which made a goodly show for the money.

"Why, this is very gallant of you," cried the young girl. "Decidedly, you are improving, monsieur."

"What, I am improving?" said De Mardeille to himself. "What does she mean by that? But there, I won't ask her — that little gift will touch her, and I feel assured that tomorrow she will

herself say to me, 'I shall expect to see you this evening.'"

"The brooch is indeed very beautiful," resumed Georgette.

"Will you do me the kindness to accept it?"

"Will I accept it? Why certainly, monsieur; and I am very grateful to you for it."

"She's very grateful to me for it — very good; the thing will go of itself now. I am not so ill-advised now as to wish to be paid for my present; I must take my departure at once."

M. de Mardeille rose, saying,—

"I must leave you now, my dear neighbor."

"What, must you go so soon, monsieur?"

"That sounds very kindly coming from your mouth. It is with great regret that I leave so early; but tomorrow I hope to be more fortunate."

"I hope so, too, monsieur."

The gentleman bowed very respectfully to the young girl without even taking her hand; he departed, delighted with the progress he had made.

"I have taken the best means," he said to himself. "Women in general are so contrary that one only has to avoid asking them for anything for them to freely give everything; now I really think that little thing is mine."

CHAPTER VIII

Colinet's Second Visit. A Pleasant Breakfast

Upon the day after that marked by the gift of the diamond brooch, M. de Mardeille, whose vanity deluded him and caused him to be lulled by the sweetest hopes, rose from his bed with the following reflections,—

"I must dress myself carefully, make the most of myself this morning. But I must be in no haste, I must be careful not to go too early to see my young friend; it is always well to make one's presence desired. So after I have had my breakfast and glanced at my paper I shall go and sit at the window for a bit, then Georgette will be sure to make me a sign to come to her which I shall be only too happy to do. Yes, that certainly is the wisest plan."

M. de Mardeille took his breakfast in a leisurely methodical fashion; he tasted his mocha with the appreciation of a connoisseur, as he mentally tasted the approaching culmination of his hopes; at length, after scanning the news and the monetary articles in several of the lesser journals, he went towards one of the windows which looked into the

court, thinking that he had deferred doing so long enough to make his presence desired. Opening the window he immediately looked down into his little neighbor's and saw, seated beside Georgette, a young man who held both her hands and looked tenderly into her eyes.

The gallant Mardeille frowned, pinched his lips, and glared furiously at them as he exclaimed,—

"By jingo! there's a young man with her — a young man! and she is supposed to receive no one but me. This is her gratitude for my brooch. We'll see about this! I shan't let her make a fool of me in this way. I must learn who this young man is that is holding both her hands while she'll hardly allow me to take one."

The person whom her neighbor saw in the damsel's room was that young Colinet with whom we are already acquainted. He was dressed almost the same as when he paid his first visit to her; only a pair of linen trousers had replaced the cloth ones, and a light cane had also replaced his thick walnut stick. But the greatest change had taken place in his face; during the three months his ingenuous and timid air had given way to a more self-reliant, reflective expression, his countenance was as frank and as open as of yore, but the simple expression had disappeared.

"How pleased I am to see you once again, Mamzelle Georgette," said Colinet, taking the young girl's hands.

"I too, am glad to see you, Colinet; it makes me very happy. And you say they are all well at home? my mother, my father, both my sisters?"

"Yes, mamzelle, I left them all in good health, and here is a letter that Mamzelle Suzanne, your second sister, gave to me for you."

"Give it to me; give it quickly, Colinet."

Georgette hastily seized the letter which the young man had brought her; she tore open the envelope and read it to herself; and one could see by the interest shown on her face that its contents were of great moment. While Georgette was reading, Colinet looked about him; he seemed to be inspecting the chamber.

"This is a very pleasant room," he muttered, "and a good deal sweller than the one down there."

Georgette had finished reading her letter, she thrust it into her bosom, and smiled again at Colinet, who said to her,—

"Will that letter induce you to go back to the country?"

"Not yet, Colinet."

"You still like Paris best, then?"

"It is not that, my friend; but I came here with an object in view, and I shall not leave Paris until I have accomplished what I have undertaken."

"You have some work to do here?"

"Yes, my friend."

"And won't you tell me what it is? I might, perhaps, be able to help you."

"No, you can't help me; and it is much better that I should not tell you now what I want to do; but some day you shall know all about it, and you will not blame me, Colinet. I am certain of that."

"Ah, Mamzelle Georgette, I shall never blame you, and I know that you are incapable of doing anything wrong. Only you are rather — what at home they call headstrong, and when you have resolved on doing a thing, nothing will suit you but to do it."

"Unless one does wrong, is there any harm in being determined?"

"No, no; there is no harm in anything you do. But formerly you used to call me 'thou'; now I notice with pain that you seldom say anything to me but 'you.'" [1]

Georgette colored and answered,—

"That's true, Colinet; but that should not pain you, on the contrary; I like you just as much as I ever did, only — it seems to me I ought not to speak as familiarly to you now as I did when we were little."

"If you are as fond of me as you were then, I ought not to complain; as for myself, I love you more and more every day."

[1] Among the French the second person is used between relatives and intimate friends, and implies familiarity or affection.

"So much the better — that fulfils my wishes; and don't change, Colinet, in that respect, for I value your love."

"Mamzelle Georgette, when anyone loves, do you suppose they can change?"

"Kiss me, Colinet."

"Yes, with a good heart."

M. de Mardeille had not seen his neighbor and the young man kissing, because this had all taken place before he came to the window. After kissing Georgette, Colinet inquired,—

"And that M. Dupont I met so often in your rooms on my last visit, does he still come to see you?"

"No, Colinet, I don't see anything of M. Dupont now."

The young man smiled and appeared delighted at this intelligence; but his brow grew gloomy when the young girl added,—

"I don't see that gentleman now, but I see another."

"What, you've made acquaintance with some one else?"

"Yes, a very fine gentleman who lives in this house; he comes very often to see me."

"Very often?"

"It's probable that you'll see him appear in a minute. Then as I shall tell him, which is quite true, that you are one of the friends of my childhood, don't forget that I am from Normandy."

"Normandy, but that, at any rate, isn't true!"

"I know that very well, Colinet; but that is exactly what this gentleman must not know. Above all things, don't mention my parents' name before him — be very careful about that."

"But why should you make all this mystery with this gentleman? You've never done anything wrong, I believe, and why should you conceal the name of your family, mamzelle?"

"Colinet, you've told me you had confidence in me."

"Why, certainly, and I always shall have it."

"In that case, my friend, refrain from asking questions which I cannot now answer. I have told you that some day everything shall be explained to you, and that ought to be enough."

"That is true, mamzelle; it was wrong of me to pester you with questions; I won't do so again, and there's an end to that. Then you are from Normandy?"

"Yes, from a little village near Rouen."

"And the name of the village?"

"The name? I don't know; what does it matter? The first one that comes; this gentleman doesn't know all the neighborhoods of Rouen. Wait a bit! Belair, there are Belairs everywhere."

"That's settled then; and I, do I come from Normandy also?"

"Of course."

"And can I still raise calves?"

"Why not? They raise cattle everywhere. Hush! I hear my neighbor."

M. de Mardeille had crossed the court like a shot out of a gun; he had come up without taking breath, and he entered his little neighbor's room like a bombshell, and went towards her without even returning Colinet's bow — the young man had politely risen as he entered the room — then he placed himself in front of Georgette and said, in a guttural voice,—

"It is I, mademoiselle."

Georgette smiled and answered,—

"So I see, monsieur."

"You did not expect me — at least, not at this moment, I suppose?"

"And why not, monsieur? I never expect you. You come whenever it pleases you; between neighbors, one doesn't stand on ceremony."

"Yes, but I believed — I did not expect to find visitors here. I thought you told me you received no one but me."

The expression of the young girl's face became serious and severe; she glanced angrily at M. de Mardeille, and exclaimed,—

"In the first place, monsieur, I think what you are saying is in extremely bad taste. If up to the present it has not suited me to receive the visits of others, understand, once and for all, that it was not to please you that I refrained from doing so."

"Mademoiselle, I —"

"One would think, to hear you, that I was dependent upon you and that you possessed some rights over me. You make me ashamed for you, monsieur."

The fine gentleman became as red as a turkey-cock; he stamped his feet and tore his gloves, but he did not know what to answer.

"To-day this friend of my childhood, who has just come up from my part of the country, called upon me to bring me news of my parents. He will always be welcome to me. I was going to present you, monsieur, when you came in and began your ridiculous speeches. You did not have the politeness to return the bow my friend Colinet made when you came in,— you, monsieur, who understand the usages of polite society so well! Allow me to believe that you are not yourself this morning, and that something has agitated your mind. Colinet, be seated, my friend."

M. de Mardeille did not know where he was; Georgette's proud look had transfixed him where he stood; at length he turned towards Colinet and bowed ceremoniously to him, and then he decided to sit down.

"Yes," he said, in a low tone, "you are right. I have a headache this morning, a very bad headache, and I feel very unwell."

"Very well, now you tell us that we will excuse you for being in a bad humor. Colinet, are you going to stay long in Paris."

"Oh, no, Mamzelle Georgette; I am only here for a day or so; I leave tomorrow afternoon."

The neighbor's face resumed its amiable expression; he balanced himself on his chair.

"What makes you in so much of a hurry?"

"Why, I have several commissions to do before I go back. We have sold some calves, and I must get the money for them."

"Do you raise cattle, monsieur?" asked Mardeille of Colinet.

"Yes, monsieur; I deal especially in horned cattle, because there is always a demand for them."

"Yes, yes; it is a good business."

Then, leaning towards Georgette, the neighbor said, in an almost timid tone,—

"You haven't put on your brooch."

"My brooch with this dressing-jacket!" answered Georgette, laughing, "as if one put on a brooch so early as this."

"Are you going to roast a chicken?" asked Colinet. "If you like, I will help you; I understand all about roasting chickens."

Georgette shrieked with laughter, and M. de Mardeille tried to do the same, but his laughter was not sincere.

"My dear Colinet, there is no question of a fowl, the brooch is a different one from that you are thinking of,"[1] said the young girl when her

[1] Broche: the French for brooch, is also the word for "spit"; hence Colinet's mistake.

laughter had subsided. "I don't do such grand cooking as that. My meals are a good deal more modest. However, my friend, tomorrow you will come and breakfast with me before leaving; I shall have a pie and a sausage; those, with a good appetite, will make a very acceptable breakfast, won't they?"

"Surely, they will, mamzelle; I shall take care to be here for it."

"If you would join us, M. de Mardeille, if our breakfast is not too humble, we shall be pleased to have you come."

The neighbor's face became suddenly radiant, it was like the sun breaking forth from behind a cloud, as he bowed and exclaimed,—

"Humble! Any meal at which you preside would seem delicious to me. Only I shall ask your permission to send a few bottles of old wine from my cellar; that will hurt nobody."

"Oh, send anything you like; we are not proud, Colinet and I, we accept anything that is offered us."

"In that case, my charming neighbor, it's an understood thing that I breakfast with you tomorrow, and in the mean time I will leave you, for you must have a thousand things to say to monsieur about your parents and friends, and messages to send to your family, and I should be sorry to be in your way. Good-by, my dear neighbor; good-day, monsieur, until tomorrow. At what hour do you breakfast, neighbor?"

"Why, at ten o'clock."

"Very well, I shall be prompt."

The fine gentleman was as highly pleased when he went off as he had been highly incensed when he came in; a few words from Georgette had sufficed to work this change. It is true that her manner of saying them was such as to admit of no reply.

Colinet seemed to reflect when her neighbor had gone, and Georgette said to him,—

"What are you thinking of, my friend?"

"Of that gentleman who was here just now. How he spoke to you when he came in."

"And you heard how I answered him."

"Yes, and I was very much pleased. So he's paying court to you, this middle-aged beau?"

"Yes, but don't be afraid, Colinet, he's no more dangerous to me than was M. Dupont."

"Since you say so I believe it, but why did you ask him to breakfast with us tomorrow? I should have been much better pleased to breakfast with you alone."

"And I too, my friend; but I have done what I ought to do, for I don't want to make my neighbor angry again, and that is just what I should have done if I had not invited him. I'm going to answer my sister Suzanne's letter, then I must write to Aimée. Tomorrow I'll entrust you with my messages."

"Well, then, I'll be off to attend to several com-

missions; for when one comes to Paris you know how they are in the country, it's who can give you the most to do for them. I have promised to dine with some friends, and I shan't see you again till tomorrow."

"Come early, then, so we can have time to chat a little before breakfast."

"Yes, Mamzelle Georgette, but what happiness it would have been just to breakfast together, the two of us."

"A time is coming, Colinet, when we shall often be together alone — but then you will desire it less, perhaps."

"Ah, Georgette, you don't believe that!"

As her only answer, the young girl extended her hand to the friend of her infancy; the latter took it and covered it with kisses, and it was necessary for Georgette to remind him of his commissions before he could make up his mind to leave her.

On the following day at nine o'clock in the morning, Frontin brought to Georgette's apartment a jar of pâte-de-foies-gras, a knuckle of Rheims ham, some cakes, some fine fruits, some bordeaux, madeira, and champagne. The valet, who remembered how he had spoken to the young shirtmaker, was now as polite as he had formerly been impertinent.

Georgette received everything without appearing in the least surprised, while Colinet, who was

already with his countrywoman, opened his eyes in astonishment, as he exclaimed,—

"What! are we going to eat all that? Why, what a spread, Mamzelle Georgette, what a feast! this gentleman must be very much in love with you to send so many good things."

"Do you think they prove his love, Colinet?"

"Why, gifts like these must always prove something."

"Yes, and in this case they prove something — but not love; you know, Colinet, there are women who allow themselves to be led astray by their love of gourmandizing."

"Yes, indeed, one sees a good many of them. Why, down our way there was Manette who went into the little wood with Blaise to eat a plum pie. But you are not that kind of girl, Georgette."

"No, indeed; I shall eat of all those things and my neighbor will have his pains for his trouble. Colinet, you won't forget to give my sisters the letters which I have given you?"

"Well, I like that! do I ever forget anything you tell me? Besides, Suzanne and Aimée always expect your letters so impatiently."

"I can well believe that, my poor sisters."

"Are you writing them that you are soon coming back to the country?"

"Not yet, my friend; not yet."

"Are you going to stay much longer in Paris, then?"

"Heaven alone knows! I can't tell anything about it."

"Your mother, good mamma Granery, so often longs to see you."

"Dear mother! Well, Colinet, tell her that my love for her is the same as ever, that she will never have to blush for me, and that I will — but silence, I hear M. de Mardeille."

The neighbor of the first floor came in, cheerful, amiable, and smiling; he greeted Georgette with deferential homage and slapped Colinet's shoulder familiarly.

"Really, monsieur, it was very kind of you to send us so many nice things. My poor little pie will be quite out of place among your fine presents."

"You are joking, my dear neighbor, we shall feast on your pie as well as on the other good things; shall we not, Monsieur Colinet?"

"Yes, monsieur; I desire nothing better."

"In that case, monsieur, let us come to the table."

They seated themselves at a table which, though not elegant, was neatly and daintily laid. In place of one of those monstrous centrepieces which are supposed to adorn fine tables, the young girl had put flowers; and women know how to arrange flowers with so much taste that they are always a delightful adornment. Georgette did the honors of her table without being in the least embarrassed or awkward; and of course she sat down to her

breakfast in her little dressing-jacket and petticoat, in which she looked as charming as possible.

"You will excuse me, monsieur, for not having dressed for the occasion, will you not?" she said to her neighbor; "but I am more used to this dress, and then I am afraid of spoiling my beautiful gown."

"You look delightful in that costume, my little neighbor; and I should have been very sorry for you to change it. Are you not of my opinion, M. Colinet; and do you not think mademoiselle is very provoking in this charming negligé?"

Colinet was busily plying his knife and fork; however, he shook his head and answered,—

"I am used to seeing mamzelle like that; in our part of the country no one dresses except on high days and holidays."

"What is the name of the place you come from?"

The young bachelor looked at Georgette and she divined that he had forgotten the name she had told him, so she hastily answered for him,—

"Belair, monsieur."

"Belair, I didn't know there was a town of that name in Normandy."

"It is not a town, it is a village."

"Oh, if it is but a village, that's different. Come, you must drink, M. Colinet. Don't you like wine?"

"Yes, monsieur, above all when it is as good as this is."

"Besides, in your country you never drink anything but cider."

"Cider!" Colinet looked greatly astonished, but Georgette touched him with her foot under the table and exclaimed,—

"Mercy, yes, cider; you know well enough that at home in Normandy cider is commoner than wine. And indeed, Colinet, I advise you not to drink too much of this, for it will soon make you tipsy."

"Why, no, don't be afraid of that," said M. de Mardeille; "pure wines never make one ill."

"You must be careful though. Why, if you should get tipsy you would not be able to go home to-day."

Georgette's reflection stopped the fine gentleman, who was about to refill the young man's glass; for he confessed to himself that it would be extremely ill-advised for him to prevent the friend of her infancy from leaving Paris.

They sat for a long time over the breakfast. Colinet knew how to keep his wits about him, even while doing honor to the neighbor's wine. Georgette was careful to change the conversation whenever M. de Mardeille spoke of Normandy. When one o'clock struck, M. de Mardeille rose, saying,—

"I must go to the Exchange."

"I must think about starting for home," said Colinet.

"A pleasant journey to you, M. Colinet. We shall meet again, I hope."

"Oh, yes," said Georgette; "you will certainly meet again."

M. de Mardeille left, and Colinet sighed as he said,—

"That gentleman is happier than I am, for he will remain near you, while I must leave you."

"No, Colinet, he is not happier than you are; for I love you, and I shall never have either love or friendship for that gentleman."

"Then you are right, and I am happier than he. His breakfast was very good; but all the same I should prefer nothing but potatoes if I could eat them with you alone."

"And I, also, my friend."

"Then why was it necessary to invite him?"

"Are you going to begin your questions all over again, Colinet?"

"Oh, no, no; excuse me, that is all done with."

"Come, kiss me and go, and be sure and kiss my father and mother for me, and my sisters."

"Be easy about that; I shan't fail to do so."

Colinet kissed Georgette and went off as downcast as he had been on his first visit.

CHAPTER IX

Twelve Thousand Francs. A Package

In the afternoon, about five o'clock, M. de Mardeille returned to Georgette's, for she was still sitting at the window and he saw that she was alone.

"Well, so your young countryman is gone?" said the gentleman.

"Yes, monsieur, he went long ago, shortly after you left."

"The young man seems very fond of you, Mademoiselle Georgette."

"Yes, monsieur, he is a true friend, of long standing," answered the young girl.

"But, really now, is he only your friend? Isn't he also your lover?"

"I have told you that I have no lover, which is the truth, monsieur; and I may add without falsehood that I have never had one," said Georgette rather sharply.

"I believe you, my dear neighbor," M. de Mardeille hastened to affirm. "I firmly believe you, although it is rare to meet in Paris a young girl of twenty years — you are twenty, I think I have heard you say, mademoiselle?"

"Twenty years and six months, monsieur."

"And six months — that makes it still stranger — who has never had a lover. It is quite idyllic. But it is your intention never to let your heart go out of your own keeping?"

"I don't know, monsieur; one cannot answer for circumstances."

"Bravo! that's very well said."

M. de Mardeille drew his chair near Georgette's, and added in a low tone,—

"And if circumstances should bring you into contact with a man who adores you and who would count it his happiness to make you happy — a man like myself, for instance — then, would you give him your heart?"

"Why, I don't know; women are so weak."

"Ah, my darling, I am the happiest of men — you crown all my hopes."

So saying, M. de Mardeille stretched his hand towards the little black skirt and was about to pass his arm around Georgette's waist, when she quickly drew back her chair, gave him a smart rap on the hand, and said in a very serious tone,—

"Well, monsieur, and what do you mean by such conduct? what manners are these? I have told you before that they do not suit me."

The fine gentleman stamped his foot angrily, and exclaimed,—

"By Jove! mademoiselle, you are making game of me, after all. You let me think you will be

cruel no longer, and then you forbid me the slightest privilège. What do you mean by that? Where do we stand? I should like to know my position in this matter."

"I am by no means making game of you, monsieur; but why did you think I should be so ready to yield to your wishes?"

"Why did I think so? — that's very pretty, when I have been dancing attendance on you for two months past, and when I have sacrificed so much for you. I won't speak of the articles of dress, those are mere trifles; but then, you seemed to wish for a diamond brooch, which I sent to you immediately. This was not a trifle, permit me to say — and when such presents are accepted —"

"The one who receives them should immediately prove complaisant to the giver — that is what you meant to say, isn't it?"

"Faith, yes; that is the usual thing, at least."

"Well now, monsieur, that is not my idea at all."

"Then, mademoiselle, what are your ideas? or rather your pretensions? for I no longer understand you."

"Come, M. de Mardeille, do you wish that I should explain myself very frankly to you? that I should tell you what I have resolved upon, in fact?"

"Yes, explain yourself; that will be quite agreeable to me. Speak; I am anxious to hear what you have to say."

"Listen to me then, monsieur. If, softened and flattered by the gift of a diamond brooch, I should yield to your wishes to-day, as you assert I ought to do, what would be the result, monsieur? When once your love, or rather your caprice was satisfied, for with most men like you love is only a caprice —"

M. de Mardeille interrupted her,—

"Oh, can you believe that I should cease to love you?"

"Yes, monsieur, yes, I do believe it, in fact, I have not the slightest doubt of it. But please let me say what I have to say. Well, if I were weak enough, foolish enough, to speak plainly, to give way to your entreaties, then,—in a month, two months, say three if you like, you would have had enough of the little grisette. She would weary you, and you would cease to see her; to put it still stronger, you would fly from her with even greater haste than you used in seeking her. Here is the young girl, then, abandoned by the man for whom she has sacrificed all, whose vows she has believed; and this man, after unfitting her for work by a life of ease and pleasure, leaves her, more often than not, with no resource against the direst poverty. Nor is that all. If the young girl's unhappiness were the only result it would be comparatively well; but the punishment of such sin seldom falls upon her alone. Often, only too often, alas! a poor child is born of this fleeting

union. Then the wretched girl, who by her ill-paid labor was barely able to support herself alone, is quite unable to maintain herself and her infant. Is not this frightful? And should not one dread the prospect of such a terrible future?"

"Oh, mademoiselle, you create imaginary events, chimeras. You are making a romance."

"Nay, monsieur, that is not romance. I speak of what I see, of what happens every day. You yourself, monsieur, who assert that I am inventing chimeras, be frank, if that is possible, and tell me whether you have never happened to lead astray and to desert some poor girl in the manner which I have described. Look back over your life, your loves and your numerous conquests, and tell me, monsieur, if you can positively assert that such a thing has never happened."

M. de Mardeille had changed color; he rose with a sullen face and walked up and down the room, muttering,—

"Good God! mademoiselle, there is no question of my numerous conquests — my adventures. I can't recall all that has happened to me — that would take me too long. Besides, I don't remember all those things."

"Say, rather, that you don't want to remember."

"Please leave all that and come back to yourself. After what you have said to me, and if I have rightly understood you, you decline to yield to any man."

"Unless he provides for me in such a manner that I never need fear poverty, and can at least provide for and bring up a child if one should come to me. Yes, monsieur, that is my firmly settled and very decided resolution, and I assure you I shall never change it."

Her handsome neighbor made an ugly grimace, and continued to walk about the room.

"Devil take it, mademoiselle," he grumbled, "you know how to calculate! you take enough precautions."

"Am I not entitled to that privilege?"

"Yes, but it is rare to find a woman like that — fortunately. With you, love, sentiment, the pride of having a lover — all that ordinarily attracts young girls, passes over your heart and leaves it untroubled. Assuredly, sensibility is not your strong point."

"Not my weak one, you mean. And you, monsieur, are, I suppose, extremely sensitive?"

"I am sensitive, I can assure you, to your charms. But my love has not touched you — you are cruelly cold to me."

"I am not so stupid as the others — that's all."

"In fact, mademoiselle, if to obtain favor in your sight it is necessary to endow you with a fortune, you can very well understand that not every one can indulge himself to that extent."

"A fortune? Oh, no, monsieur, I am not so ambitious as all that. I do not ask a fortune;

but simply what would bring up and educate the child who might be the result of such a union."

"Oh, you only want something for the result? but if there should be no result?"

"Well, then, it would be for the young girl, who would at least be provided against want."

"Oh, it will be for the young girl — if it's not for the child. You think of everything. You are capable of acting as a bank cashier."

"I shouldn't be sorry to have such a job. Men generally earn more with their pens than women can earn with their needles."

"They don't satisfy their love for dress with their needles, it is true."

"No, it is necessity that obliges them to use their needles."

"They are not obliged to be coquettish or fond of dress."

"You, for one, would be sorry if they were not."

M. de Mardeille kept on walking about the room, humming between his teeth,—

"When one knows how to love and please
Needs one any other fortune.

No, no, that isn't at all applicable to this case.

His victim Cupid never spies;
He wears a bandage o'er his eyes.

That is a good deal truer.

Come, lovely dame, I wait for thee,
I wait, I wait for thee."

Georgette continued to work as if the gentle-

man were not there. When he was tired of singing, the neighbor went up to the pretty shirt-maker and said to her suddenly,—

"How much does it cost for a baby's pap?"

Georgette smiled and answered,—

"Seek, and ye shall find."

"Good! now she's quoting the gospel to me. But there is something I have been looking for all my life, and which I have never found. I shan't tell you what it is, out of respect for your sex; but all men will divine what I mean. In fact, to come back to the subject of your demands: It seems to me that with two or three thousand francs[1] one might buy a lot of pap, and for a long time, too."

"Do you suppose a child lives on pap alone?"

"That or anything else; it costs so little to feed a child."

"But feeding him is not the only thing; he has to be clothed. As he grows up his education must be looked after, and then he must be apprenticed in order that he may learn a trade; he must know how to earn a living so that later he may be able to help his parents."

"Oh, tra la la! At that rate you'll never be done. You might as well ask me to buy a man right out, if it is a boy; and to provide a dot if it is a girl."

"Why, that would but be right."

[1] Four or six hundred dollars.

"Did I not tell you, mademoiselle, that you wanted a fortune right in your hand?"

"No, monsieur, you exaggerate! For it seems to me — yes, let's admit that it is a boy you have to bring up — well, then, I think it might be done with twelve thousand francs."

"Twelve thousand francs," and M. de Mardeille gave a leap which almost brought his head against the rather low ceiling. Then he resumed,—

"Twelve thousand francs! and do you think that is nothing, mademoiselle?"

"I think it is only just what would be necessary to bring up a child to manhood. But by putting the entire sum in the savings bank one would get a little interest and so increase it in the end. You may well believe that the mother would keep none of it for herself; but at least she would be sure of her child's future."

"And as this mother would use none of this income for herself, it would still be necessary to support her."

"Oh, no, monsieur; that sum once given would be all; she would wish to receive nothing further."

The fine gentlemen again walked up and down the room, muttering these sentences from time to time,—

"How strange is the world becoming, it is a school where one learns new things every day. Why, women are becoming craftier every day; we men are nothing but children beside them. Twelve

thousand francs! Why with that, not so very long ago, a hundred women would have been content. I don't speak for myself, for, thank God, I have never ruined myself for women. I've got along without loosening my purse strings, which I very much prefer, for I am at least sure of being loved for myself. They don't offer to break off the bargain in that case."

"Monsieur, do you know that your reflections are not polite?" said Georgette, whose patience was taxed by this gentleman's soliloquies.

"Why, mademoiselle, it seems to me that it is at least permissible for me to grumble."

"No, monsieur, that is not permissible. You blame my conduct, but if I wished, monsieur, I should have but a word to say to make you blush for yours — to force you to hang your head before me and to ask my pardon for all the impertinences you have offered me."

M. de Mardeille stared in amazement and muttered,—

"Mademoiselle, I don't understand a word you are saying; if you will explain yourself more clearly— "

"It does not suit me to explain further at this moment — but be easy, you will lose nothing by waiting."

The neighbor took his hat.

"I shall lose nothing? that's a question," he muttered to himself. "I'm afraid I'm let in for

the brooch. If I dared, I would ask her to give it back — but I dare not, inasmuch as I have an idea that she would not return it if I asked her. This little girl is imposing on me. She has such a decided way of speaking; oh, what an idiot I have been! This will teach me to make sacrifices for the women."

And turning towards Georgette, the gentleman bowed slightly to her and departed less beaming than in the morning, and muttering, —

"Twelve thousand francs! a little shirtmaker. What are we coming to? Good God! what are we coming to?"

During the whole of the ensuing week the gentleman of the first floor was in an abominable temper. He went in and out of the house incessantly, scolded his servants, ate scarcely anything, slept badly, and did not once look out of the windows facing the court.

One day Frontin was about to make some remark concerning the young girl in the entresol, when his master suddenly interrupted him by saying, —

"If you utter a single word to me in regard to that shirtmaker — one single word, remember — you'll go flying out of my door, accelerated by the toe of my boot."

But when the week had almost passed M. de Mardeille, who feared that he could never regain his appetite or his desire for sleep, and who saw with

alarm that his fresh and beaming countenance had become as yellow and wrinkled as a roast apple, that his forehead was lined, that his cheeks had fallen in, and that if this went on he would soon look as old as he really was, said to himself,—

"It cannot go on like this! I try to distract myself, and I cannot. I court other women, who welcome my attentions; but I do not go back to them the second time. This Georgette's little phiz is eternally before my sight. I see her in my mind's eye, coming and going about her room, attired in her dressing-jacket and that little skirt. Her charming figure has turned my head and I can't get her out of my thoughts. And, after all, I should be very foolish to allow myself to go into a consumption, when if I choose I may become the happy lover of this young girl. I know it's going to cost me something; but, after all, what is twelve thousand francs? that won't ruin me, inasmuch as she says positively that she will ask nothing further from me. And there are some women who are incessantly asking. One doesn't give them much at a time, but it mounts up, it comes to the same thing and more, in the end."

And M. de Mardeille turned towards Frontin,—

"Frontin," said he, "you haven't met our little neighbor for a long time, have you?"

Frontin, remembering that his master had forbidden him to speak of Georgette, looked at him in astonishment before he answered,—

"Madame Picotee? Yes, I met her only this morning in the court?"

"Why, who's speaking of Madame Picotee, idiot? Did I not say our little neighbor? I should not apply such a term to that matron. I was speaking of the charming Georgette."

On hearing him mention the pretty shirtmaker's name, Frontin said to himself, —

"That's a shame; he's forbidden me to speak of her and he's putting me to the proof."

Then placing his finger on his mouth, Frontin turned towards his master and shook his head as much as to say,—

"Ah, I ain't so stupid as to answer that."

M. de Mardeille impatiently shook his valet's arm and shouted,—

"Are you going to answer me, you rascal?"

"Monsieur, you forbade me to speak of the young lady in the entresol."

"I countermand that order, simpleton."

"Well, I couldn't divine that."

"I wish now that you should speak of her, that you should tell me all you know about her; and you must know something, for you are always at the porter's."

"Hang it, monsieur, it's still the same story; M. Bistelle sends billets-doux and bouquets to Mademoiselle Georgette and begs her to receive him; but nixie, she won't let him in, and she sends back his billets-doux."

"Really, Georgette won't see this gentleman? That's very good indeed, that is. She receives me, though, and M. Bistelle is rich and must have made her alluring propositions. I am preferred, then; she must have a sneaking regard for me. She only refused me because she'd got this cursed calculation into her head — this fear of results. But I am preferred, I am loved, for it's the same thing. Is that all you know, Frontin?"

"Why, there's that old gentleman, the old bachelor, M. Renardin, who still desires to send something to his little neighbor, so he ordered a fine Savoy cake; I don't know how Mademoiselle Arthémise found it out, but find it out she did; then she placed herself on the watch at the porter's lodge and she stopped the pastry-cook's boy on his way and grabbed the Savoy cake! She scooped some of it out underneath and then put it on her head as a cap, and she looked like a Turk in a turban; she walked all over the house that way and served her master's dinner with it on her head. And he happened to have company to dinner."

"Well done! well done; and this gentleman, does he flatter himself that he can win her affections with his sponge cakes? what an ass!"

M. de Mardeille went to the window and lifted the curtain that he might look out. Georgette was still in her accustomed place, and seemed more charming than ever. His only fear was lest she

was angry with him; however, he could not resist the desire to open his window and seat himself beside it, so that he might watch for a look from his neighbor. It was not long before she glanced over towards him; then he greeted her with a low bow, to which she responded with an altogether amiable smile. He was delighted, beaming; he passed an hour at the window, and several times Georgette smiled at him.

"She is not vexed, she will receive me kindly, I can see that in her eyes," said he. "Yes, I may go to see her without fear. Yes, but then if I don't make the sacrifice, I shall be no nearer than I was before."

The day passed and still M. de Mardeille had not resolved on his course of action. Several times he had been to his secretary, counted some bank notes, looked at them sighing, and put them back in their place. It was war to the knife betwixt love and avarice in this gentleman's heart, which was cruelly shaken by the conflict.

The next day M. de Mardeille was still undetermined, hesitant; he could settle himself to nothing, when suddenly Frontin came running in and said,—

"M. de Mardeille, come and look out of the window, Mamzelle Georgette is in the court and she's going to pump, if you did but know how gracefully she pumps."

"Let's see; let's see her."

And our lover hastened to the window which was exactly opposite the pump. Georgette was there in her little fluttering skirt; the exercise of pumping brought a rosy glow to her cheek and made her more beautiful than ever. Did she suspect this? Probably she did, for she appeared to enjoy that which for many others is very fatiguing.

M. de Mardeille, after contemplating for some moments the animated scene, ran quickly to his safe and took therefrom a pile of bank notes; he did not hesitate this time, but thrust them hurriedly into a pocket-book which he slipped into his pocket; then hastily repairing his toilet he left his house to go to Georgette's, saying to himself, like Cæsar when passing the rubicon: "Alea jacta est."

The young shirtmaker had hardly had time to leave the pump and ascend the stairs to her room, where she sat down again to her work, when M. de Mardeille arrived, impressive in his haste and palpitating with hope. He seated himself near Georgette and opened the conversation by saying,—

"My dear little neighbor, I've come to beg your pardon."

"Beg my pardon! Why, I don't remember that you had offended me."

"But I did so the last time I was here, I said some things to you that I should not have said."

"Then, monsieur, I have forgotten them."

"So much the better, then; but it is very amiable of you to have done so. But, charming Georgette, I could not live away from you; I was very unhappy."

"Were you really?"

"Yes, so true is it that to prove my love for you I am ready to make any sacrifice, something I have never before done for any woman; I would do it only to kiss the hem of your dear little skirt — which always flutters away when I wish to touch it. Here, darling girl, accept this pocket-book, it encloses twelve thousand francs in bank notes, let it put an end to your coldness."

Georgette blushed; her eyes shone with joy and triumph; she took the pocket-book, looked at it without opening it, and murmured as she lowered her eyes,—

"Since you have complied with my wishes, I will yield to yours; but I still ask you for one day's respite. Today I wish to devote to family matters, to my memories of childhood; but tomorrow, oh, tomorrow you will find me cruel no longer."

"I can refuse nothing to her who promises me happiness. Then tomorrow you will not be severe; you will let me touch this roguish little skirt which has put my heart in a desperate condition."

"You shall touch it as much as you like tomorrow, and I shall not oppose you."

"Enough, enough, divine creature. I won't hear a word more, and I leave you until tomorrow; for you are so tantalizing that I dare remain no longer. Then tomorrow we will breakfast together and your windows shall be snugly closed, hey?"

"They shall be; you shall see."

M. de Mardeille departed in the seventh heaven of delight.

"She put me off till tomorrow," he mused, "I have an idea that she wanted to count the contents of the pocket-book to see if it contained the sum I had promised her. Oh, she's a cautious little girl, she doesn't allow herself to be easily caught napping. She will see that I have not deceived her, and this time I am certain she will keep her promise."

An afternoon and an evening stretch to interminable length when one expects upon the next day to see the fruition of his hopes. M. de Mardeille did all that he could to kill time; he went to see his friends, dined at a restaurant, went into several theatres, returned home very late, went to bed, and ended by falling asleep and dreaming of Georgette.

The much-desired day dawned at last, but our gentleman slept rather late; he rang for Frontin, who came on tiptoes.

"What time is it, Frontin?"

"Nearly ten o'clock, monsieur?"

"What! have I slept so late as that? Why didn't you wake me?"

"Wake you, monsieur? You didn't give me orders to do so and I should never have dared!"

"No matter! get everything ready for my toilet. I want you to curl my hair carefully; I wish to look as well as possible this morning."

"You always look well, monsieur."

"Not so bad, for a simpleton."

"I meant to say that anyone who is rich can always look well."

"You're talking like a fool now. Oh — Frontin, go and look through the dining-room window and see if my little neighbor Georgette is at her window."

Frontin went and came back to say,—

"Monsieur, it's very extraordinary, but all Mademoiselle Georgette's windows are closed, and she usually keeps them all open."

"Closed!" exclaimed M. de Mardeille, "Ah! yes, I remember, that's what I asked her to do yesterday. That proves that she is expecting me. It's very awkward to have slept so late. Come, Frontin, be quick with my hair!"

The servant hastened to curl his master's hair. When he had done, the latter said to him,—

"Now, go to the sideboard and take some madeira, some bordeaux, some champagne; carry it over to the little neighbor's, and tell her I sent you! In five minutes I will be with her."

Frontin disappeared; but he returned before his master had finished dressing; he held a bottle in each hand and the third under his arm; and he looked even stupider than usual.

"What, idiot! you haven't yet done what I told you? You haven't taken that to Georgette's?" exclaimed M. de Mardeille.

"Pardon me, monsieur, I went, but there was nobody there. That's why I came back with my bottles."

"Nobody there! why she's gone out, of course, to buy something. Couldn't you wait a moment on her landing?"

"Why, that's just what I was going to do at first; but it is well I thought better of it, for it seems I should have waited uselessly."

"How uselessly? What do you mean? Come, explain yourself."

"Monsieur, on my way back I met the porter, and I said to him, 'So Mamzelle Georgette's already gone out; do you know if she'll be long before she comes back?' Then he began to laugh, and answered: 'Hang it, if you wait for her, you'll wait a long time; she's been gone since yesterday evening.'"

"Gone since yesterday evening? Come now, Frontin, you don't know what you are talking about; you must have misunderstood. Gone! and where has she gone to?"

"That's just what I asked, monsieur. It seems

the damsel has moved, bag and baggage. She paid the porter yesterday evening; called in a second-hand furniture dealer and sold all her furniture; then she got into a cab and went off without saying where she was going."

M. de Mardeille turned green, red and gray, he dropped into a chair, murmuring,—

"A glass of water, Frontin; a glass of water! I believe I am going to be ill."

The servant hurried off for the water and brought it to his master, remarking,—

"Were you so very much smitten with the little neighbor, monsieur?"

Then M. de Mardeille threw the glass of water in Frontin's face, shouting,—

"Hold your tongue, you ruffian. I have been robbed! that is what is the matter with me. Go and find the porter, I must speak to him."

"Just so, monsieur; he has something to give you from Mademoiselle Georgette, for he said to me: 'Is your master awake? I have a package to give into his own hands from that young girl, who gave me strict orders about it before she left.'"

"And you didn't tell me that, idiot? Go, run! tell him to come up immediately."

"Wait, monsieur; somebody's ringing — that must be him. I'll go and open the door."

The fine gentleman was still wavering between hope and fear; he said to himself, as he awaited the porter,—

"This packet must be my bank notes, she's sent them back. She's reflected and she's thought better of her bargain. If that is so, I shall have to make the best of it."

The porter came into the tenant's room holding a package of sizeable proportions carefully wrapped in paper and which he carried under his arm as if he was bearing the keys of a city. He showed it to M. de Mardeille, who eyed it suspiciously, as he said to himself,—

"I never gave her enough bank notes to make a package of such dimensions as that."

"Monsieur, that is what the young lady in the entresol charged me to give you when she left."

"When she left! But why did you let her leave? Had you given her notice?"

"No, monsieur; why, her rent was all paid up, she paid a term in advance, and I could not prevent her going; what is more, she seemed in a good deal of a hurry."

"And you didn't ask her where she was going?"

"Pardon me; she told me she was going down to the country, to her home, and that she would be back in Paris within a week."

"And she didn't leave her address with you?"

"No, monsieur; but she left this scrap of a letter for you."

"Well, give it to me, then; that's what you should have done at first. Leave me now; Frontin, you may go also."

The porter and the valet departed, saying to each other,—

"It's a pity he didn't open the package."

"Yes, I am very curious to know what the little shirtmaker can have sent him."

"Couldn't you feel what there was in the paper?"

"Jingo! no!"

"Was it hard?"

"No, it was soft."

"Then it was probably a cream-cheese that the little shirtmaker had received from her home."

De Mardeille opened the package; it contained the little black skirt that Georgette had worn.

"Her skirt!—she has sent me her skirt!" cried M. de Mardeille. "What bitter derision!"

Then he opened the letter and read,—

I told you that to-day you might touch and handle my little black skirt as much as you pleased. You see how I keep my word; I send it to you. You will think very ill of me, will you not, monsieur? But before condemning me wait until you have seen me again, which will be as soon as I can possibly bring it about. Yes, rest assured you shall have news of me.

M. de Mardeille was astounded; the letter dropped from his hands.

CHAPTER X

A Blasé Young Man. The Viscount's Friends. The Third Skirt

Time passed with its usual velocity; a fortnight had elapsed since the events recorded in our last chapter, and we must now enter a new scene and a more aristocratic neighborhood where we shall make the acquaintance of some entirely new personages.

In a very handsome house in the Rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin a blasé young man, wrapped in a luxurious dressing-gown, was strolling listlessly from one room to another of his magnificent apartments as he smoked a cigarette. This young man was the Viscount Sommerston.

Descended from a very rich family of the Irish nobility and born in France, he had never been desirous of quitting the land of his birth to dwell in that of his ancestors; at the age of one and twenty he had come into possession of an income of eighty thousand francs, and had immediately given himself with all the ardor of a misguided youth to that disorderly life of pleasure and debauchery which ages a man prematurely, both mentally and physically.

Tall, well-built, handsome, rich, a bachelor, he possessed twice as much as was necessary to kill in a period of ten years any man who did not know how to resist his passions. The viscount was twenty-nine years of age; he was not yet dead, but he was barely more than alive; he had not only used the good things of life, but he had abused them all. The list of his conquests was immense, and among them were many whom he had known only for a week, this gentleman being inconstant and capricious in the extreme; the woman whom he adored to-day he would look upon with the coldest indifference tomorrow. Unfortunately for him, he had met few virtuous women, who would have known how to show him his place; his renown as a roué and as a heedless, reckless fellow was, on the contrary, a recommendation to the women among whom he was thrown and to whom he paid his court.

At the time of which we are writing, Edward Sommerston had dissipated part of his fortune; but enough still remained to him to suffice him for happiness had he but known how to make a good use of it; he did not know how to employ himself nor even how to amuse himself, everything wearied him to the point of extinction.

He had exhausted his power of loving and of all pleasurable emotions, and had ruined his digestion with an over-abundance of champagne and malvoisie; he still played at cards, intermittently

and indifferently except when fate was unfavorable to him,— and when he lost heavily he experienced almost the only emotion that could bring back the flush of life to his listless and emaciated countenance.

One thing alone retained its former zest with this gentleman, and that was smoking. You never met him without a cigarette in his mouth, for he smoked them incessantly, one after the other, indoors as well as out; he was never contented except when indulging in this pernicious habit. He could not, so he said, get along without it. He partly owed this bad habit to the foolish indulgence of those ladies who allowed him to smoke in their rooms, and who sometimes even smoked with him. What do you think of those of the fair sex who smoke?

In vain did the doctors say to the viscount,—

"You are wrong to smoke to such an excess, it will make you ill; you cough, you have weak lungs, and you will end by drying them up; you will go into a consumption."

But this advice had a contrary effect on the young man, who pretended to know more than the doctors, and who had said,—

"They forbid me to smoke, do they? well, I shall smoke all the more, to show them how little I value their opinion."

In fact, the number of cigarettes smoked by Edward Sommerston became so great that it ended

in his valet having no other occupation than making them for his master.

From time to time Edward had travelled, hoping to find new sensations in new climates and scenes; he had visited the Alps, Spain, Italy, England; but unfortunately for him, in any country he who can scatter gold on his way finds no obstacle to his desires; women are vain, men are selfish, innkeepers are grasping, and servants are flatterers everywhere. In Spain, thanks to the jealousy of that people, the viscount had had not a few duels; but as he was well skilled both with the sword and the pistol, he had always been the victor, a fact which had, however, never afforded him the slightest satisfaction.

Once only, while travelling in Switzerland, had an incident occurred which had yielded him the deepest gratification; in trying to climb a dangerous glacier he had fallen into a crevasse, where he had remained for nearly six hours, and had been extracted therefrom by the help of guides and ropes. Edward had been drawn forth half frozen, but highly delighted, and he had retained the remembrance of this accident as one of the most agreeable events of his travels.

Now the viscount, who had only been back from Italy about three weeks, was sauntering about his rooms smoking a cigarette which he had nearly finished, while at a respectful distance his valet Lépinette was engaged in preparing others for him.

Suddenly the viscount stopped short in the middle of the drawing-room and exclaimed,—

"Lépinette! what time is it?"

"Almost three o'clock, my lord," answered Lepinette.

"Is it, indeed? Give me another cigarette, will you?"

"Here it is, my lord."

"I must go and finish dressing. What the devil am I going to do to-day? do you happen to know, Lépinette?"

"It seems to me that I recollect hearing your lordship say that three of your lordship's friends, MM. Florville, Dumarsey, and Lamberlong, were going to call for you to accompany them on horseback to the Bois de Boulogne," answered the accommodating Lépinette.

"Why, yes, you are right; these gentlemen are coming to call for me. (This cigarette doesn't draw, give me another.)"

"Here it is, my lord."

"I don't much care about riding in the Bois—it's always the same thing, it's very monotonous. Lépinette, my good fellow, can you by any possibility suggest something that will prove more entertaining to me?"

"I should be glad to do so, my lord, but your lordship is so very difficult to please; what others would like, you dislike, or at least it affords you no pleasure."

"That's true, I am rather hard to suit in the way of amusement; in that I resemble Louis XIV. But in coming back to Paris I hoped to find something new. This one also draws badly — give me another."

"Here it is, my lord."

"But no — there is nothing new — nothing striking."

"There are a good many pretty women in the neighborhood, my lord."

"Ah, yes — to your taste; not to mine. But don't I hear horses' hoofs in the court?"

"Yes, it's your lordship's friends."

"Confound it! and I'm not dressed. Well, the worse for them; they'll have to wait. Give me another cigarette."

The viscount's friends came into the drawing-room in riding costumes, with their crops in their hands.

The first was a tall young man over six feet in height, but who was so thin, so slim that he looked as if he might snap in the middle should he bend over; and what added to this appearance was the fact that he was always dressed in the latest fashion, and therefore squeezed and compressed himself into his faultlessly-cut garments, so there was not the slightest fold or crease anywhere about him; a good many ladies envied this gentleman his waist. His name was Florville, and his face was sufficiently pleasing.

The second was a young man of middle height, whose frankly red hair and eyebrows and eyelashes did not prevent his believing himself a decidedly handsome fellow, and who dared not turn his head for fear of rumpling his collar or disarranging the knot in his tie; he was one of the habitual frequenters of the Théâtre-Italien, where he never missed a first representation, for he wished to pose as a great connoisseur in music, and was certain that he would have been able to produce the lower chest "do" had his voice been cultivated; but then, it had not been cultivated. This personage, whose manners were as ridiculous as his pretensions, was M. Lamberlong.

The third visitor at the viscount's was a young man of thirty years or thereabouts, neither handsome or ugly, rather stout than thin, with a laughing face, a good-humored expression, and the appearance of a man who went the pace; the name of this latter individual was Dumarsey.

Florville and Dumarsey had monstrous cigars in their mouths; the young man with the flaming hair did not smoke, but he had a glass stuck into his right eye and was never seen without this monocle; his good friends asserted that he should have worn one on his left eye, too, to hide his hideous eyelashes entirely.

"Here we are, Edward! Why, he's not ready!"

"I was sure he wouldn't be, I'd have been willing to bet on it."

"Why, what is your hurry, my dear fellows? In the first place it's a deuced deal too early to go to the Bois, we've plenty of time. I'll go and finish dressing. Lépinette, give me a cigarette."

"Here it is, my lord."

"You will allow me to finish dressing in your presence?"

"Go on! go on! take your time," said Dumarsey. "I have an excellent londres, and that is all I care for just now."

"And I'm not overjoyed at the flavor of this imitation havana," remarked Florville.

"M. Lamberlong, if you would like a cigar the box is on that stand. I smoke nothing but cigarettes myself, but I always have cigars at the service of my friends."

"Infinitely obliged, my dear viscount; but I don't hold with smoking. Yesterday at the Opera-Bouffes there was a gentleman who smelled of tobacco and it was annoying to a good many ladies."

"But as you're not going to the Bouffes this evening, you need not —"

"Oh, but I'm going to a concert this evening to hear Albani sing."

"Really, you think of nothing but music."

"Yes, it is my element!"

"You must know, Edward," said Dumarsey laughing, "that Lamberlong would have produced the chest 'do' if only his talent had been culti-

vated. It was a great pity to have neglected his 'do.'"

"Isn't there still some way of catching that note by taking to the railway — an express train, for instance."

"Gentlemen, you are laughing — but it is nevertheless true that lately at the Bouffes a gentleman said to me, 'Your place is here!'"

"In the balcony?"

"No, no; at the Bouffes, with sixty thousand francs salary."

"He must have heard your chest 'do,' must this gentleman."

"Yes, he did, as I was leaving college."

"One must confess it, some mortals are excessively fortunate! Now here is a gentleman who has heard Lamberlong's chest 'do.' And here are we who pay a fabulous price, we may rent the whole of the Opera-Bouffes, and we can't hear it! It's mortifying in the extreme."

The young man with the red hair rose impatiently and went to look at the pictures which adorned the drawing-room.

"What's the latest news in society, fellows?" said Edward as he retied his cravat.

"By Jove, nothing of any interest — nothing spicy. We haven't had a good scandal, the principals of which are known to everyone, for some time past."

"Well, who is the fashionable beauty just now?

Remember, fellows, I've only just got back from Italy, and I know nothing of what is going on in Paris."

"There are five or six who are greatly in vogue, but you've seen them; you were at the party at Saint-Phar's the night before last, weren't you?"

"I saw nothing marvellous there — if that's all you have to offer me!"

"Yesterday, there was a ravishing blonde at the Bouffes, she attracted everybody's attention."

"Well, did you inquire who she was, Lamberlong?"

"Yes, she's the wife of a rich Spaniard who brought her here from Brazil."

"Oh, if he brought her from Brazil, that's quite out of the question — that's altogether too far to follow a flame."

"But you, viscount, must have had some romantic adventures in Italy? The women there are very vindictive they say."

"Not more so than in France. I've seen the glitter of the little stilettos they wear in their belts or their garters, but I've never felt the point of one of them."

"Then you didn't have any desperate love affairs."

"None at all; it's really very dismal — love has taken his flight, my dear fellows."

"A certain young man who frequents the orchestra at the Bouffes doesn't say that; he's dying

of love for an actress, but he won't tell us which one."

"Only those who frequent the Bouffes do such things nowadays. Lépinette, a cigarette!"

"Here it is, my lord."

"How many of those do you smoke in a day, Edward?"

"I don't know, I haven't counted."

"Two dozen, I wager!"

"And I say, three."

"By Jove! you've only to ask my valet; he's better capable of informing you in regard to that than anybody else."

"Lépinette, how many cigarettes per diem does your master smoke — as near as you can tell?"

Lépinette reflected, then he answered,

"Messieurs, I've sometimes given his lordship as many as sixty; but never less than forty."

"Ha, ha, ha! that's magnificent; sixty cigarettes a day! You deserve a prize, Edward; we shall have to make you a crown of cigarettes."

"My dear fellows, one must do something; and when one has no other pleasures —"

"Come, viscount, you'll never make me believe that you are not taken up with some little beauty or other."

"No, my dear Florville; at this present moment there is no one. I am done with love, it's ended for me — my heart is invulnerable to its darts. The incendiary glances of the ladies ignite

no flame, but leave it cold and frozen; and besides, when one knows women, one knows also that one can put no faith in their vows."

"Oh, there are exceptions," said Dumarsey. "Wait a bit, Edward; didn't you once have a connection with a very pretty young girl — I think you picked her up — took her from some haberdasher's shop — she came from Lorraine? She was a simple young country girl, hardly more than a peasant?"

"Oh, yes, I remember, it is Suzanne you mean."

"Suzanne! exactly so; I remember you called her so. She seemed to be very fond of you, did that little girl."

"That's to say, she was altogether too fond of me; it became insupportable, she was so awfully sentimental."

"What have you done with this Suzanne?"

"What have I done with her? Why nothing. What can one do with a girl of whom one has grown tired, but part with her? There's nothing else to be done."

"Then you don't know what has become of her?"

"No, really; and I should be very sorry to know. I had enough trouble to get rid of that little thing, who was very importunate. Lépinette, give me a cigarette."

And the viscount ill-temperedly threw down the

cigarette which he had in his mouth, and from which he had hardly taken three puffs. Since they had spoken to him of this young girl called Suzanne his forehead had been marred by a scowl and his face had taken on an expression of ill-humor. But young Lamberlong brought a smile to everyone's face by exclaiming,—

"By Jove! I can't remember what they are playing at the Bouffes tomorrow! Can any of you fellows tell me?"

"Lamberlong, do give us a little peace with your Bouffes! You must know, fellows, that he doesn't miss a single performance at the Italian opera and he doesn't understand a word of that language."

"Who says that I don't know a word of Italian? It's false; I understand it very well indeed."

"You know it when you hear it, but you don't understand it."

"You understand it, you say; well, then, give me an answer to this. 'Pone nos recede?'"

The young man with the red hair scratched his forehead, looked at the ceiling and muttered,—

"I never heard those words at the Bouffes."

At this the dandy shouted with laughter, and Florville exclaimed,—

"What, didn't you know that Dumarsey was talking Latin to you?"

"Latin! and how did you think I should understand that? Do you suppose I know Latin?

— a dead language. They don't sing in Latin at the Bouffes."

"My lord's horse is saddled," announced a little groom, putting his head in at the door.

"Very good, then we'll start, fellows. Oh, Lépinette, have you filled my cigarette cases?"

"Yes, my lord, I've filled them all, and even put some in your pockets."

"Very good. Come on, let's mount, fellows."

Two days after the riding party, Edward Sommerston was extended on a sofa in his smoking-room with a cigarette in his mouth, as usual, and feeling bored to death as he watched the puffs of smoke rise and then break and spread themselves into a mist so thick that one could hardly see from one end of the room to the other. Suddenly a door was half-opened; Lépinette put in his head, and as he tried to get sight of his master through the clouds of smoke, he said in a low tone,—

"Is your lordship asleep?"

"Eh! no, I'm not asleep. I only wish I were; but smoking never sends me to sleep. What do you want with me?"

"I came to tell your lordship that I've made a discovery."

"A discovery! What, have you found a — a treasure — so much the better for you; keep it."

"But, monsieur, this isn't a treasure in money; this is something quite different and a good deal more to your lordship's taste, I warrant."

The viscount half rose as he said,—

"What is this remarkable discovery then?'

"It's a woman, my lord; or rather, a most charming young girl."

The viscount dropped languidly back on his sofa.

"And you ventured to disturb me for that," he said, with a drawl; "is that what you call a treasure?"

"I should have thought your lordship would be glad to know that there was a young person in the house who is quite worthy of a little attention."

"And this beauty lives here — in the hotel?"

"Yes, my lord; the porter here, who is also the landlord's agent, has some rooms on the upper story which he has furnished nicely, and which he lets on his own account."

"Yes, his perquisites; I understand. Well, go on."

"Well, he's rented one of these rooms to Mademoiselle Georgette, an extremely well-conducted young person, who rarely goes out and never receives anyone in her room."

"Very good. Then your treasure turns out to be virgin gold. Does the porter vouch for that?"

"No, your lordship, he hasn't positively affirmed it; I simply repeat to you what I have heard."

"And what occupation does this straight-laced maiden follow?"

"She makes small articles of tapestry work — embroidery — pretty little flummeries, lamp mats, for instance; small rugs for the feet, cigar cases — admirable cigar cases."

"How come you to know all this? Have you been buying something of this young girl?"

"No, my lord, but the porter showed me one his new tenant had given him for a present; it was very pretty."

"The porter smokes then?"

"Yes, like a chimney, my lord."

"These clowns ape everything we do; well, what has all this to do with me?"

"I thought your lordship would be curious to see the little girl on the top floor?"

"A common little face, I suppose, and flirtatious manners — a grisette who wants to be run after — I know them only too well."

"Oh, no, she hasn't a common face. I don't say she's a beauty, my lord, for that wouldn't be true; but she's very pleasing, on the whole; she has a very slender waist and a charming figure, a well-shaped ankle, and a tiny foot."

"Indeed, you seem to have taken an inventory of this young person's charms, Lépinette?"

"Just now, monsieur, I was on the landing as she was coming upstairs in a dressing-jacket and a short skirt, both of which were as white as snow, and the skirt was embroidered at the bottom. Oh, she looks as if she was prosperous enough, and

she was singing as she went up the stairs. At first I drew back to let her pass, and she bowed very graciously; then, as she was going up the next flight, I said to her, 'Are we to have the honor of having you for a neighbor, mamzelle?'"

"Deuce take it, Lépinette! you did not lose any time in scraping up an acquaintance."

"When one has the distinction of serving your lordship, one ought to know how to conduct one's self with the fair sex."

"Not so bad! go on, Lépinette."

"The young person stopped and answered very amiably, 'Yes, monsieur, I live in the house'; then she bowed again and continued on her way upstairs."

"Is that all?"

"No, my lord. As this meeting had been very pleasant to me, I took care to be on the landing several times after that — and 'twas well I did so, for just now the damsel went lightly down."

"For one who never goes out it seems to me the young lady is very often on the staircase."

"My lord, she'd forgotten to buy some coffee; and it seems she's passionately fond of it — she can't get along without it."

"Did she tell all that?"

"Yes, my lord, just in passing quickly by; she didn't stop. She won't be long before she goes up again, I think, and if your lordship wants me to I'll go and watch over the banister, and as soon

as I see Mademoiselle Georgette down below I'll come and tell you."

"Come now, do you suppose I shall bother myself to go and look at a grisette? Lépinette, you're a fool."

"I only wanted your lordship to see her in her jacket and short skirt, they are so becoming to her."

"Hang it! there's a very simple way of seeing this grisette, without putting myself out in the least; she makes tapestry cigar cases, you tell me. I'll order one from her. Watch for her as she comes back, and when you see her beg her to come in for a moment; you can tell her what for"

"All right, monsieur, I'll go and put myself on the watch to do your commission."

Lépinette departed on his errand and Edward Sommerston resumed his cigarette; but five minutes had barely elapsed when the valet said to his master,—

"My lord, the young person is here."

"What young person?"

"The little girl from the top floor who makes cigar cases."

"Oh, I'd forgotten your damsel. Well, let her come in."

"Here, my lord?"

"Of course, you don't suppose I'm going to disturb myself to go into the drawing-room to receive a grisette, do you?"

"I'll bring her in here, then."

The servant went out, but soon returned to announce, "Mademoiselle Georgette"; and that Georgette whom we already know, since we have seen her in the Rue du Seine and the Boulevard Beaumarchais, came into the smoking-room in her little morning costume; but this time there was something more of refinement and of coquettishness in her simple toilet; her dressing-jacket was trimmed with narrow lace and her white skirt was embroidered at the bottom, while her hair was done up according to the prevailing mode, one could see that she now belonged in the Chausseé-d'Antin.

Georgette took three steps forward then two backward, as she exclaimed,—

"Good heavens! what a dreadful smell!"

Then the viscount turned on his sofa and said languidly,—

"You don't like the smell of tobacco, then, little one?"

"Oh, is there some one there? One can't see for the clouds of smoke. Faugh! I can't stay here. I shouldn't want any one to think that I'd been in a guard house"

And Georgette darted out of the smoking-room, went down a passage, opened the first door she came to, and found herself in a charming drawing-room, where she stopped for a moment.

"Good enough! at least one can see clearly

here and does not risk being poisoned by tobacco."

The young man, astonished by Georgette's sudden flight, got up, laughing, and said,—

"She's very odd, this little girl; though I could not see what she looked like for the smoke. But where the devil has she gone to. Let's see! let's look for her, we'll play at hide-and-seek; it will make me think I'm a boy again."

After looking first in one room and then in another, the young dandy came at last to the one in which Mademoiselle Georgette had taken refuge; he saw her seated in an easy chair and turning over the leaves of an album which was on a stand beside her. This young girl's lack of ceremony, the ease which she displayed in this fine drawing-room surprised Edward, who said, after looking attentively at her for some moments,—

"Those caricatures seem to amuse you!"

Georgette rose and gracefully bowed to the viscount as she answered,—

"I expected that you would come, monsieur, and I did not think I was doing any harm in looking through the album."

"No, you've done no harm, except to escape from my smoking-room as if you had got into a bear's den."

"Goodness, monsieur, I don't know that I shouldn't prefer a bear's den to a room where the smoke prevents one from seeing anything and

makes one's eyes smart and gives one a headache, to say nothing of the insupportable odor one has to breathe."

While Georgette was speaking, Edward examined her from head to foot, but the scrutiny was all to the young girl's advantage; and he muttered to himself from time to time,—

"Very good, by Jove! very fetching indeed, that confounded fellow Lépinette wasn't deceiving me."

Then the viscount walked about the room still scrutinizing Georgette, who was standing in the middle of it, and he smiled as he admired the graceful figure in the little white skirt, until Georgette, rendered impatient by this inspection, cried,—

"Will you not soon have done looking at me, monsieur?"

"Why, you are very good to look at?"

"Is that what you wanted me to come here for?"

"Well, and what if that were the reason. My valet has praised your figure, your carriage, so extravagantly that I wanted to see if what he said was true."

"If I had known that I certainly would not have entered your rooms. Good-day, monsieur."

"Why, just a moment! what a hurry you ar in, Mademoiselle Georgette; for I believe that Georgette is your name?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"And from what part of the country do you come?"

"From Bordeaux, monsieur."

"From the south, I would have wagered it."

"And why would you have done that?"

"Because you seem to me to have a rather inflammable little head."

"Oh, my head's all right, monsieur."

'Do you live alone up there?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"And how many lovers have you, Mademoiselle Georgette?"

The young girl looked at the viscount rather impertinently; then she replied,—

"I haven't any, monsieur."

"What, not one, not a tiny little one?"

"No, monsieur."

"That's very surprising."

"What do you see to surprise you in that, monsieur? Don't you suppose a young girl can live and support herself without a lover?"

"In Paris I should think it would be deuced difficult"

"Not more difficult in Paris than elsewhere; a woman can always do so if she wishes."

"Not always. The desire to please, coquettishness, is innate in all women. They want fine clothes, and they can't earn the wherewithal to buy them; they want to wear silk dresses and Indian shawls You are charming in that little

costume, but you could not go to the Mabille in it."

"I don't hold with going to the Mabille."

"You don't really mean what you say, do you?"

"Yes, I do, monsieur."

"No lover! what a phenomenon, for with that waist, that tiny foot, you ought to have made numberless conquests."

"Why, yes, of course I might."

"And you listened to nobody?"

"To nobody."

"Then you have a faithful swain, no doubt, in your own part of the country, or some secret passion which fills your heart?"

"No, monsieur, I have no secret passion."

"Such being the case, I can only remark again that you are a phenomenon, and I am proud to have so rare a neighbor. But perhaps you are afraid of loving, afraid of love?"

"Me? I am afraid of nothing."

"Ha, ha, ha! how amusing you are."

"So you think me amusing, monsieur? Really, I ought to be flattered."

"I think you are provoking, bewitching, ravishing."

And the young man was about to put his arm round Georgette's waist, but she quietly pushed him away, and said in a very decided tone,—

"Monsieur, these manners don't suit me, and I warn you they are never successful with me."

"Forgive me, mademoiselle; I forgot that I had to do with a Lucretia."

"Is that all you have to say to me, monsieur?"

"Well, not quite; you see, I wanted to order a few cigarette cases, my servant has told me that you make charming ones."

"I do the best I can — do you want one?"

"If you will kindly make it for me."

"What color do you want?"

"Oh, I leave that entirely to you."

"All right, monsieur; I charge fifteen francs."

"As you please; the price matters little to me."

"Well, in that case, monsieur, you shall have your cigar-case within three days."

"Very well; will you kindly bring it yourself?"

"Certainly, monsieur."

"I shall not ask you into my smoking-room."

"So much the better, for the smell of tobacco gives me a headache. Good-day, monsieur."

Georgette made a most enticing little curtsey and the viscount said, as he watched her depart,—

"By Jove! she must be mine, that little brunette; for she is really very original."

CHAPTER XI

An Attempt. Tertia Solvet

Edward Sommerston placed not the slightest particle of faith in what Georgette had said as to having no lovers; the viscount did not credit for a single moment that a young girl could live alone and work for her living and yet be pure and virtuous.

"This little girl," he said to himself reflectively, "is playing a part, she is not so innocent as she would wish to appear; she thinks by this means to make people more generous to her, to get more out of them. I have seen too much of the world, however, and too much of her class, for that kind of craft to impose upon me. Eventually, of course, she will prove complaisant like all the rest; for she is a woman, and she wouldn't belong to the fair and frail sex if she were not fond of dress and adornment, jewelry, dainties and pleasure, for those are the things that lure them all."

During the three days which were to elapse before she brought the articles he had ordered, the young man several times inquired of his servant if the latter had met the young embroideress who

lived above, on the staircase; but Lépinette had not seen Georgette again, and it seemed to have vexed him. Perhaps the servant hoped to win the young girl more easily than his master.

On the day that Georgette had designated, Edward, arrayed in an elegant morning costume, awaited the young girl in a pretty little drawing-room which sometimes served as a boudoir. He was smoking cigarettes, but they were of a very mild and slightly perfumed tobacco.

About mid-day Lépinette announced, "Mademoiselle Georgette!" and the young workwoman presented herself, still in her morning costume, for which she apologized as she greeted the viscount.

"Forgive me, monsieur, for presenting myself in this negligé, but I could not spare time from my work to change it, and I never dress in my room."

"The little jade knows very well that she looks better thus!" commented Edward to himself; "and that's why she came in that little short skirt. If she hadn't been so well-built she'd have come in full sail, with no end of draperies. I understand all about that. Mademoiselle wishes me to admire her perfections; and from that I deduce the idea that she wishes to please me."

Then the young man, without troubling himself about rising from his easy chair, pointed Georgette to a chair.

"Pray be seated," said he, "you are very well

as you are; besides, one does not dress to run into a neighbor's. Will it be displeasing to you if I continue to smoke?"

"Why, monsieur, it is not for me to place any restraint upon you."

"As for that, this tobacco is very mild and the odor is not obnoxious even to those who don't like tobacco."

"That is true, it smells like patchouli."

"Did you have the goodness to think of my cigar case?"

"Here it is, monsieur," and Georgette handed the viscount a pretty cigar case lined with silk.

"That's very nice, that's really very nice."

"I am glad it pleases you."

"I should be hard to please if that didn't suit me; the colors in these little squares are so perfectly blended. You have a good deal of taste as well as skill. And it only took you three days to make that?"

"That's long enough."

"It must be worth fifty francs at least."

"No, that would be too high a price to pay for it. I only want what belongs to me."

"But at that rate you can barely earn five francs a day, for you have to buy your wool and silk."

"If I could earn five francs a day I should be more than satisfied. I should be too rich."

"You're not very ambitious. You don't wish to change your position then?"

"Hum! that's according to circumstances. To change it for a short time only is hardly worth while. But I have my dreams sometimes, monsieur, and then I imagine I am in a fine apartment; I have diamonds, cashmere shawls, a carriage, servants to wait on me, and everything magnificent."

"I understand the apologue," said Edward to himself. "She requires nothing short of her 'dreams'; she has an eye to her own interests, has this little jade."

While reflecting thus the young man arose from his chair, and placing himself in front of Georgette, he threw his body back, put his hand on his hip, and laughed in her face.

"Say now, do you know, you are not half stupid?"

Georgette sustained his look and received his compliment without displaying the least emotion, merely rising and remarking,—

"I am extremely happy to know you have such an opinion of me, monsieur."

"Well, why don't you sit down? You don't mean to say you are going already?"

"Yes, monsieur, for I can't waste my time in doing nothing — I can't afford to do so."

"Stay just a moment, however; let's talk a bit. In the first place you can't go until I have paid you."

"Oh, I am not uneasy about that, I am willing to give you credit."

"And in that you are wrong, perhaps; please grant me a few moments. It gives me much pleasure to talk with you."

Edward took Georgette's hand and induced her to sit down again, then he seated himself close beside her, and began by saying,—

"There is one thing that you don't know."

"And what is that, monsieur?"

"Why, I am in love with you."

"Ha, ha, ha! how foolish!"

"Perhaps it is foolish, but whether it is so or not, it is all the same to me. Yes, I am rather surprised at it myself, for do what I would I have not been able to fall in love for some time. There must be something about you, though I don't know what it is, something more enticing than there is in other women. Wait a bit! I believe, by Jove! that it is your little skirt that has stormed the fortress of my heart."

"If it be that, monsieur, I'll go upstairs to my room, and I shall send you the little skirt as soon as possible, in order that you may be bothered by no further desires."

"What a mischief you are! No, that won't suffice me. I want the little skirt, and its wearer also. What a pretty little hand."

"Monsieur, don't touch me, I beg of you. I have told you already that I don't like such manners."

"That's true, I keep forgetting that you are not

that kind of a girl. I am little accustomed to meeting girls like you."

"Oh, you have such a bad opinion of women; you must have met some that were pure and good, and probably you seduced them and then abandoned them, as other men do."

"That's possible. I don't remember anything about that. With me, those with whom I had to do in the past are always wrong."

"I can well believe that, monsieur; that is why it is always necessary to take precautions for the future."

"How droll she is! Do you know, my dear, you're an immensely comical little thing."

"I forbid you to call me 'my dear,' monsieur; as I see it, nothing justifies you in doing so."

"Because you have not yet consented to make me happy; but before long you will do so — so it all comes to the same thing."

"No, monsieur, I will not be your mistress, if that is what you mean. Once more, I tell you, don't speak to me like that, or I shall go, and I shan't come again."

"Come, now, don't be angry, Mademoiselle Georgette, you shall be treated respectfully. You are willing I should be your lover, aren't you?"

"No, monsieur."

"What! I must have seriously displeased you then."

"No, it isn't that."

"If it isn't that, then it's — "

"No, I don't care to listen to you, because I know you are too flighty — you are never faithful to any woman longer than a month at the very outside; and I don't wish to put myself in the way of being thrown over like that."

"Some one has been telling you fairy tales. I don't promise to love you forever. By Jove, though, if we don't throw the women over, they throw us over. Some one has to begin and I prefer it should be me."

"You have a way of settling things that doesn't help me change my opinion about you. You are too much run after, too highly thought of in society to attach yourself to a grisette."

"There's some truth in what you say there! you reason very logically, my charmer; but what if I were to tell you that there are even now some great ladies who are over head and ears in love with me, and that I only make fun of what they may say or think of me?"

"Why, I shouldn't believe you. Good-by, monsieur; I must go home."

"I can't let you go without an answer."

"Later on — we shall see."

"Then you will come and see me again? Besides, I must have two more cigar cases — I want to give them to my friends. By the way, let me pay you for this one."

And the young man, drawing a purse full of

gold[1] from his pocket threw it on Georgette's knees. The latter looked at the purse for some moments, then she weighed it in her hand and asked,—

"What have we here?"

"That's what I owe you."

She opened the purse, counted its contents, and exclaimed,—

"Nearly five hundred francs! why that would be a good deal to pay for a cigar case."

"Then you must make me two more — that will pay for all."

"Oh, no, monsieur, I cannot accept that; I'll take what is due to me and I'll take nothing more."

So saying, Georgette took fifteen francs in gold from the purse and put the remainder on a stand nearby, then she took her departure.

"Good-by, monsieur le vicomte, I shall come back when your cigar cases are done."

Edward was so much taken by surprise at the young girl's action that he made no effort to keep her. As may be imagined, Georgette's refusal to accept the purse full of gold had not diminished the young man's fancy for that maiden; instead, it strengthened it, as she had known very well it would. Desires which are quickly satisfied seldom last long; one's passions need obstacles to increase

[1] Purses of knitted silk were then in vogue, and one could naturally see the gold or silver shining through the meshes.

them and keep them from dying down. A happiness which runs smoothly along nobody wants; it is like a dish without seasoning.

But owing to this new caprice, which had become so imperious, the viscount was no longer bored, and he smoked fewer cigarettes; which goes to prove that love has its uses, after all. His friends perceived the change.

"My dear fellow, you've some new fancy in your head," said Florville; "I would be willing to bet on it."

"Why, you can see it from the expression of his eyes," said Dumarsey. "It's some new love affair that brightens him up like this."

"You're right, fellows; you've guessed it. I've taken a violent liking — deuce take it, I believe I am in love."

"Really! then she's very pretty."

"She's better than pretty — she's provokingly original and enticing."

"Did you see her at the Bouffes?" demanded the affected Lamberlong.

"At the Bouffes? Oh, I can assure you that she never goes there."

The gentleman with the red hair made a grimace as he murmured,—

"What kind of a woman can she be who never goes to the Bouffes, by Jove!"

"Say now, Edward, what kind of a woman is your new flame?"

"What kind? Why, she's all that's nice and modest; but I adapt Boileau's epigram to women —'All kinds are good except the ones who bore us.'"

"And when are we to see your paragon?"

"Oh, you shall see her as soon as my success is assured, my dear fellows."

"Then the thing hasn't come to a focus?"

"No, and I shall take good care not to make you acquainted with her yet; for I know you, you would try to oust me."

"Surely, among friends, you're not afraid of that."

"And do you think you will have to languish long before the lady's heart yields?" said Florville, "you, viscount, who ordinarily pursue Dan Cupid on a railroad at express speed?"

"Oh, this time I have to do with a mutinous little charmer, who is not eager to say 'yes.'"

"Come, Edward, when will you show us your beauty, which will signify that you have gained your ends. I'll give you three days, surely that's long enough."

"Hum, I don't know as to that."

"Wait a bit, fellows, let's do the thing generously; we'll give him a week. But if in a week he doesn't ask us to dine with his new conquest, we shall declare that he's defaulted. What do you say, Edward?"

"Yes, fellows, in a week. I take the wager."

"If you bring the lady, we pay for the dinner; but if you don't bring her, you'll have the pleasure of feasting us."

"So settled — in a week. Oh, I have every hope of coming out all right."

This meeting had taken place two days after the conversation at the end of which Georgette had refused the purse containing the five hundred francs.

As soon as his friends had gone, the viscount said,—

"I must act now. This young woman has refused gold, but gold has not the same attraction for the eyes as ornaments. She has exhibited her pride in a very determined fashion, but this time I am going to send her some presents that she cannot resist."

The young man got into his carriage and had himself driven to the most fashionable shops; he bought a fine shawl, some silk and velvet materials and a pretty little bonnet which he thought would be becoming to the saucy face of her whom he wished to please. He brought his purchases home with him and said to Lépinette,—

"Take these things to the young girl on the top floor, Mademoiselle Georgette. Give her my compliments and tell her that I should like to have the cigar cases I ordered of her and that I shall expect her in the morning, even if she only has one made."

Lépinette took the rich presents delicately and went to do the commission with which his master had charged him, and the latter left to go to the horse races.

On returning home in the evening the viscount's first care was to ask how his presents had been received. Lépinette assumed a grave air as he answered,—

"I've seen to-day, my lord, something I've never seen before."

"And pray what have you seen? you act like a sybil announcing a portent."

"Well, my lord, I've seen a young girl, a simple workwoman, who lodges in an attic, refuse a cashmere shawl, silks, velvets, and other articles of adornment, that's all."

"What! you really don't mean to say that Georgette —"

"Yes, my lord; Mademoiselle Georgette has refused your presents."

"Impossible!"

"It is so, my lord."

"You must have managed it badly."

"Not at all; besides your lordship knows I'm used to these errands. I spread out the stuffs and the shawl on a table under the very eyes of this astonishing young girl, who first of all let me do it, and looked at them without saying anything, at length she exclaimed, 'What is to be done with all that, monsieur?' 'Mademoiselle,' I answered,

'You can do what you please with it. My master begs you to accept all these things, and sends his compliments to you asking if you will bring him the cigar cases, even if they are not made.' "

"That was extremely bright on your part. Go on."

"Then Mademoiselle Georgette rose and going over to the presents, said, 'These are all very pretty, very elegant, but I don't want them. You will thank the viscount very greatly on my behalf, and you will carry back all these fine things.' 'But, mademoiselle,' I exclaimed, 'I can't take back all those things, my master ordered me to leave them with you.'

"'Because your master thought that I should be very pleased at receiving such beautiful things; but as he is mistaken, you will take back his presents.'

"'Mademoiselle,' added I, in a supplicating voice, 'you may do what you like with these materials and ornaments, but please keep them or else my master will scold me.' 'I am very sorry, but I cannot keep them!' So saying this extremely stubborn young woman put everything into my arms, the shawl, the stuffs, the box containing the bonnet, and pushing me gently outside the door she closed it on me. This is exactly what passed."

"And so you brought back my presents."

"I had to, my lord."

"Not at all, you needn't have done any such

a thing; you are a fool. You should have thrown them all down in the room and come off without them."

"I bet that she would have thrown everything out on the landing."

"Well, it's a great bother; we must see what's to be done about it. By the way, did she tell you that she would come tomorrow morning?"

"Yes, my lord."

"That's good."

Edward could not get over the young girl's conduct; he walked agitatedly about the room. At times he was half tempted to go up himself to Georgette's room; but she might refuse to open the door to him and he did not wish to furnish a spectacle for the whole hotel; so he went to bed.

"She will come tomorrow," he soliloquized, "I shall know why she refused my presents, for I asked nothing in return for them — however, she might have imagined — Oh, Mademoiselle Georgette, you won't always resist me. I believe I really am in love with her. Besides now my honor is involved in this affair; it must not be I who have to pay for my friends' dinner."

All night the viscount was pursued by the image of this young girl who had refused his brilliant presents. He rose early, began to smoke, and threw away several cigarettes he had hardly commenced. He had all the things he had sent to Georgette carried into the little drawing-room; he

looked at the stuffs spread out on the divan and said to himself,—

"Perhaps she did not like these colors, though this shawl is really a beauty. No, that cannot be the reason. Can it be that she really wishes to walk in the path of duty rather than in the path of pleasure; but what of that day dream she was telling me of in which she imagined herself to be very rich? the little girl has some idea in her head and I must find out what it is."

Towards noon Georgette arrived and Lépinette conducted her into the little drawing-room, where the viscount was impatiently awaiting her. She bowed to him and gave him a charming smile; he on the contrary was sulky and showed her a seat, saying coldly,—

"Will you not sit down, mademoiselle?"

"Monsieur, your cigar cases are finished, here they are."

"Very well, but I wasn't bothering about them."

"Your valet told me you wanted them, however."

"My valet is an ass. For the matter of that, you know very well that the cigar cases are only a pretext for seeing you; of what use is it to pretend when one can speak frankly?"

"Why no, monsieur, I did not know it."

Edward showed the objects strewn on the divan and said to Georgette rather brusquely,—

"Why did you refuse those things?"

"Why did you send them to me?" she replied in the same tone.

The young man found no answer to this, he began to laugh and then exclaimed,—

"Decidedly, no one can get the last word with you. Come, my dear, let's have a game of cards on this table. Will you?"

"I don't know how to play cards."

"Oh, you understand very well what I mean by that; but I will explain myself categorically. I adore you."

"You have already told me that."

"In love it is allowable to repeat one's self; in fact, that is the charm of it. We will say, then, that I adore you."

"As for me, I don't believe it."

"I shall compel you to believe me! You don't imagine that you can pass all your youth without learning what love is?"

"I don't, monsieur, but I have always heard tell that it was best to swear to nothing."

"That's very reasonably spoken. Well, let me be this fortunate mortal who is to teach you how to love. I am sure I can make you happy, give you a future that will be worthy of envy."

"Men will always say that to the girls whom they wish to lead astray — but later on —"

"As for me, I keep my promises. In the first place I shall settle you in a pretty apartment which I shall furnish tastefully; you will have dress

and jewels; I shall take you to the theatre and into the promenades; you shall have a carriage at your orders. I will pay your tradespeople, and what is more, you shall have a thousand francs a month to spend. Come, how does that please you?"

"Why, that's very generous, but how long would that last?"

"As long as you loved me."

"You mean to say as long as you loved me, and the love of you gentlemen who are able to satisfy all your fancies never lasts long."

"I shall have but one fancy hereafter, and that will be to please you. Well, Georgette, you have heard what I have to say, and you will consent to make me happy, will you not?"

And the viscount tried to snatch the young girl's hand, but she drew it quickly back, and answered,—

"No, monsieur, no."

"What, you refuse my propositions?"

"I refuse them."

"Then you must have some reason for hating me! do you dislike me so much?"

"Not at all, I assure you."

"Then my offer doesn't satisfy you. Well, tell me what you desire, explain yourself I beg of you."

Georgette was silent a moment, at length she said,—

"If I were to tell you what I wish you would think it very ridiculous, I am sure."

"No, no, speak; women have the best right in the world to be fanciful, but—"

"But this is not fanciful, it is merely foresight for the future. Monsieur, how much do you think it would cost to bring up a little girl from the cradle up to the age of sixteen or thereabouts? in fact, to educate her to womanhood?"

The young man stared in astonishment as he answered,—

"What the devil makes you ask me that? and what connection can that have with my offer to you?"

"A very close one, I assure you; in short, will you not answer me? What would the education of a young girl, her maintenance, everything cost?"

"How should I know. Do you suppose that I busy myself in thinking of such things as those?"

"Oh, no, I know very well that you don't; but what does that matter? tell me as nearly as you can?"

"Well, let's see, three or four thousand francs would be enough, wouldn't it?"

"No, monsieur, you are very far off in your reckoning; according to my estimate it would cost quite twenty thousand francs."

"Twenty thousand francs! come now, that isn't possible; twenty thousand francs for a baby!"

"Yes, monsieur, when that baby is a girl, and

one wants to give her an education, accomplishments, until she is grown up! Really, monsieur, I thought you were more generous; forty thousand francs a year does not suffice you for your pleasures, and you think that twenty thousand francs to educate and bring up a girl from infancy to womanhood is too much! Ah, that's just like the men."

"Eh, what? no, no, you are right, twenty thousand francs is not too much; but for God's sake let us leave this subject, and go back to yourself. You are not always going to be so cruel to me, are you? What do you wish then, in short, for you have not told me?"

"Well, monsieur, if I should consent to do as you wish, as it might easily happen that a little girl might come to me, I wish to have what would bring her up, what would give her an education, and as I have no faith in the promises of one who wishes to make such a connection, I want that before I give myself to him. Do you understand me now?"

The viscount was astounded, he knit his brows and drew his chair away from that of Georgette, and said after a moment,—

"Ah, so that means that you want twenty thousand francs before you come to me."

"Yes, monsieur, that is the idea."

"You are asking a good deal, mademoiselle."

"But I am not asking it for myself," answered

the young workwoman, casting on Edward a disdainful, almost scornful look; "it is for the little girl, the child."

"The little girl, the little girl, why you haven't got one yet. You might wait at least until you had before asking that."

"Oh, no, for then it would be too late, and I should certainly be refused."

"Do you think so?"

"I don't think so, I'm sure of it," and so saying Georgette fixed so expressive a look upon the young man that he could not bear it, and lowered his eyes as he murmured,—

"In fact, it is quite possible."

After some moments' silence, Georgette rose, saying,—

"Good-by, monsieur."

"What, are you going, mademoiselle?"

"I think we have said all that we have to say."

"Pray excuse me, but your ultimatum set me to thinking. You will let me think it over a bit, won't you?"

"Oh, as much as you like. You compelled me to tell you my idea; it is a bit of foolishness, think no more of it."

"And why should I not think more of it? Surely you were not saying that as a joke?"

"No, I was speaking very seriously; but I am quite sure that you will not make a sacrifice for me — of which I am not worthy."

"Why, I don't say that, only one hasn't always such a sum at his disposal."

"There is no hurry about it, monsieur, we are likely to meet often again. Excuse me, but I cannot stay longer now, I must go to work; so good-by again, monsieur."

Georgette escaped from the young man's hand, for he tried to keep her, and exclaimed when she had gone,—

"I suspected rightly; she is a knowing little thing, as full of tricks as the devil. She has as much wit as she has mischief. But twenty thousand francs like that, all at one stroke; oh, no, I shan't be so foolish as that for a grisette, — that would not be common sense. With her fable of a little girl! She reminds me of poor Suzanne who had, I think, a — little girl; but what the devil am I thinking of that now for? Come, let's forget all that, and go to the club."

The viscount went off to his club and then to the house of one of his friends, where they played for high stakes. He sought distraction at a game of baccarat, he lost ten thousand francs at the first go and ended by winning three thousand. He then stopped playing and said to himself,—

"I should, however, have been willing to lose twenty thousand francs, and I should have had to pay them within twenty-four hours. If I wished, it would not be difficult for me to procure that sum. I have only to sell some railway shares; but

no, no, that would be too stupid altogether, I'm sure that I should be sorry for it afterwards."

Two days passed by, during which the viscount did his best to forget Georgette ; but on the third, being still pursued by her image, he rose early, saying to himself,—

"Hang it! I am very simple to torment myself in this way, when the happiness I am longing for depends on myself. After all, what are a few bank notes more or less? I could economize in something else. I will go to my banker's and get the matter done with ; besides, it is the day after tomorrow that I'm to dine with these gentlemen, and it shan't be said that I have to pay for the dinner."

Edward went to his broker and made him advance the sum of which he had need on account of the shares which he was to sell; then he returned home, put the twenty thousand francs into a handsome pocket-book, and having ordered Lépinette to take again all the things that he had before sent to Georgette, he said to him,—

"Go up to that young girl's room and give her, first of all, this pocket-book and all these other things, and ask only when I shall see her. Go, I shall watch you from the staircase, so see that you do nothing stupid this time."

The valet went up the two flights and the viscount impatiently awaited his return. This time Lépinette came down beaming.

"Well!" said Edward.

"The damsel opened the pocket-book. I did not have the curiosity to look what she was counting, but I think they must have been bank notes."

"What then, idiot?"

"Then she seemed delighted, and said to me as pleasantly as possible, 'Kindly tell your master that if he can come up this evening between eleven and twelve o'clock, it will give me great pleasure. I want to thank him personally.'"

"Bravo, at last 'tandem! denique tandem felix!' Oh, I knew very well I should attain my end, and those fellows can't make game of me."

The young man was ridiculously cheerful. He asked for some cigarettes, of which he had not thought since he had had so much to occupy his mind; then he went out to try and kill time.

He returned home at eleven o'clock in the evening, but he waited patiently until midnight, in order that he might not meet any one on the staircase; then he took the candlestick and went lightly up the two flights. He had made Lépinette point out to him the girl's door; it was the last on the right, there was no chance of his mistaking it. On reaching the door he had found the key in the lock.

"She thinks of everything," said Edward to himself, "as she has arranged it one has no need of knocking, and one need not wait on the landing. That's good enough."

He softly turned the key and went into the room, which was completely dark.

"She has gone to bed already," thought the viscount, and he walked toward the end of the room. He held out his light — there was nobody there; the bed was empty and had not been disarranged. Unable to understand what this meant, the young man looked about him; at length, on a table near the mantelpiece he perceived all the presents which he had sent to Georgette, nothing was lacking, not even the bonnet; on a piece of stuff she had spread out the little white skirt and on the skirt was a letter, addressed to Viscount Sommerston.

Our lover snatched the note and hastily read,—

My Dear Viscount: — I am gone, and you need not look for me. I take with me your pocket-book and its contents, I need only that; I leave you all the rest. What is more, I leave you also my little white skirt which seemed to please you so much; but one day I shall ask it of you again, for I expect soon to see you and explain my conduct to you. Perhaps then, in place of thinking me culpable, you will agree that what I did was quite natural.

The viscount remained for some time stunned, looking first at the note and then at the skirt, then he burst into a shout of laughter, as he said,—

"She is comical, this little girl, and the adventure is quite spicy. I shall regale my friends with it as I pay for that dinner the day after tomorrow."

CHAPTER XII

The Gentlemen of the Three Skirts. The Wherefore

Towards the close of the following month of September, upon a delightful autumn day, at precisely two o'clock in the afternoon a gentleman might have been seen walking up and down in the Jardin des Plantes in the pathway in front of the monkey house.

This gentleman was no other than our old acquaintance, M. Dupont, whom we have lost sight of for so long. We left the Brives-la-Gaillard gallant alone in the private room of the place where he had dined tête-à-tête with Mademoiselle Georgette, who had left him very suddenly, because this gentleman had thought that he could easily do as he pleased with a young girl who had always conducted herself modestly and virtuously when in company with him, and who having consented to dine with him at a restaurant had been forced by circumstances, and against her will, into dining alone with him in a private room. He had been mistaken, however, and his good luck had comprised only a little striped skirt which she had left in his hands.

Since then Dupont had returned to Brives-la-Gaillarde; he had carried with him the little skirt, but had been very careful not to show it to his wife, who would have thought it singular that her husband had brought nothing from Paris but a second-hand skirt. However, Dupont had returned home less inclined to sleep than he had been before his journey; which was one thing in favor of the capital. From time to time when he was alone he had taken the grisette's skirt from its hiding-place; he had looked at it lovingly, he had sighed as he recalled the one who had worn it, whom it had become so well. Upon these days Dupont was still less sleepy than of yore and his wife would say to him,—

"My dear, you did well to go and pass some weeks in Paris, you have come back much livelier, it has done you good."

At length, towards the middle of September, Dupont had received a letter which read as follows,—

If you desire, monsieur, to see again Mademoiselle Georgette, whose acquaintance you made during your stay in Paris last spring, be in that city on the twenty-fifth of this month, and have the kindness to go at two o'clock to the Jardin des Plantes, into the path which faces the monkeys' house, where she will meet you. You will be kind enough to bring with you the little striped skirt which Mademoiselle Georgette left in your possession.

Dupont had trembled with joy when he had read this note,—

"She wishes to see me again, does this charming girl," said he to himself. "The skirt is only a pretext; she repents of having treated me so badly and wishes at last to recompense my devotion. Yes, I shall certainly go to the place she appoints."

Hastening to his wife he said to her,—

"My darling, it is necessary that I should again take another journey to Paris; I must see Jolibois, and then I think it is necessary for my health, this morning I really couldn't rouse myself."

"Yes, my dear, yes, go to Paris," answered madame; "that can but do you good, but don't stay there so long as you did last time."

And this is why our old acquaintance, Dupont, is waiting on the twenty-fifth of September in the Jardin des Plantes in the neighborhood which had been indicated to him, and feeling from time to time a pocket of his gray coat, into which he had rolled the little striped skirt that he had been asked to bring with him.

Presently Dupont perceived that he often passed a middle-aged gentleman very elaborately got up; in this person the reader will recognize M. de Mardeille, who some days previously had received the following note.

If M. de Mardeille is willing to take the trouble to go, on the twenty-fifth of this month at two o'clock in the afternoon, to the Jardin des Plantes to the pathway in front of the monkeys' house, he will there find Mademoiselle Georgette, who will explain to him the motives of her conduct towards him. She will be greatly obliged to him if he will bring with him her little black skirt.

M. de Mardeille had carefully kept this appointment with Georgette, for he ardently desired to see her again.

"Perhaps," said he to himself, "she intends to return the twelve thousand francs which I was stupid enough to give her."

Then he had had the little black skirt wrapped up and tied with twine and put it in the pocket of his overcoat, and had hastened to the place which had been indicated to him. After a little time a third personage appeared on the scene and began to walk up and down, the same as these two gentlemen; this latter was the young viscount, Edward Sommerston, who had received a letter exactly similar to that written to M. de Mardeille, except that it was addressed to the viscount and begged him to bring with him the little white skirt. And as our young dandy had no idea of thrusting a petticoat into his pocket, he was accompanied by a tiny groom who carried the garment in question on his arm and held in his hand a provision of cigarettes. These three gentlemen had not been walking up and down long before they had noticed each other.

"One would say these two dandies also had an appointment in this pathway," said Dupont to himself.

"These two old bucks also seem to be waiting here for some one," thought the viscount, as he smoked his cigarette.

And M. de Mardeille made a similar reflection regarding Edward and Dupont.

Presently the first few drops of a rainstorm began to fall and immediately all the people who were walking about the garden and all the admirers of the monkeys disappeared, except the three gentleman with the skirts. The latter continued to walk up and down the same pathway, and as there were but three of them, and the little groom who followed his master, they could not doubt that each of them had an appointment and as they passed each other they could not help smiling, and each of them had on the tip of his tongue these words,—

"Is it not tiresome to have to wait for anyone? If it were not for a pretty woman whom I expect to meet I should have gone long ago."

Dupont had more than once desired to open a conversation with one or another of his fellow-promenaders, but had not dared.

"The time wouldn't seem so long," he said to himself, "if I were chatting with these gentlemen, it would give me patience; but perhaps they are not in the humor to chat."

Suddenly Edward stopped and pulled out his watch, M. de Mardeille did the same, and Dupont immediately hastened towards them, drawing out his watch also. This time he ventured to say,—

"Excuse me, gentlemen, but will you kindly tell me what time it is by you? My watch is

perhaps fast and I should very much like to know exactly what time it is now. It is twenty-two minutes past two by me."

"Twenty-two minutes past two, that is exactly what it is by me," said M. de Mardeille.

"Well, by Jove! our watches keep better time than the Charles XV clocks," said the viscount as he looked at his watch. "Mine says exactly the same as yours, gentlemen."

"Why do you say that the Charles XV clocks do not go well?" asked Dupont.

"Are you not aware that that monarch after his abdication developed a passion for horology? He amused himself by repairing and remaking clocks, of which he had an immense quantity, and they went so well together that, as a reward for his labors, he sometimes heard twelve strike during an hour."

These gentlemen laughed a good deal at this anecdote of Charles XV's clocks, then Dupont exclaimed,—

"I had an appointment for two o'clock, though, in the garden — in this pathway."

"So had I."

"And I also."

"But women are never prompt."

"No, never."

"When they are young and pretty, especially, they know how to keep people waiting for them."

"Yes, they do it to increase their welcome."

"As for me," said Edward, "I will wait five minutes more; but if Mademoiselle Georgette is not here at the half hour I shall take myself off."

"Georgette!" exclaimed M. de Mardeille.

"Georgette," muttered Dupont, "why that's very odd, for I am expecting a Georgette too."

"And I also."

"By Jove! this is getting peculiar! A dark girl, middle height, whose figure is perfection itself, and such a foot, such a leg; in fact she is all that's delightful."

"That is the exact portrait of the person I am expecting."

"And it is precisely that of the Georgette that wrote to me."

"This grows very comical," said the viscount; "I have a letter here."

"I have the one she wrote to me."

"And I also."

"Let's see; why, yes, it's the same writing. By the way, gentlemen, I have one of her skirts which she left in my possession, and which she begged me to bring to her. Tom, come here and show us what you are holding under your arm."

The little groom approached and exhibited the white skirt, immediately M. de Mardeille and Dupont drew from their pockets the skirts which they had thrust into them before leaving home, and showed them, saying,—

"I have also brought her a skirt."

"And I the same, as you see."

Then these gentlemen all three burst out laughing so loudly that the monkeys tried to imitate them. When this access of gayety had quieted a little the viscount said,—

"Don't you think, gentleman, that this young girl is making game of us in asking us all three to meet at the same place."

"I begin to think so," said M. de Mardeille.

"And to send us in front of the monkeys," said Dupont, "she must have chosen this place intentionally."

"Decidedly she's not coming; here, it's half-past two, I'm going."

"Wait a bit, monsieur, here is a lady coming this way."

"But she's on a gentleman's arm."

"Mademoiselle did not write that she was coming alone."

"I can't distinguish her features yet, for she has a bonnet on."

"But that is not at all her figure; the person who is coming towards us has an enormous funnel-shaped skirt."

"That's a crinoline, that's the latest fashion."

"By Jove! it's ugly enough, surely, and the Georgette I'm expecting used to dress herself so becomingly. One could see how she was made."

"But for all that, the nearer she comes the more it looks to me like her."

"Why, yes, in fact, one would swear it was she."

"It is she. It is really Georgette, gentlemen; wait, she is coming towards us. Oh, there is no longer any doubt of it."

In fact it really was Georgette, dressed tastefully and simply, except that she wore one of those fashionable crinolines which made a woman look like a sugar-loaf. She was arm in arm with Colinet, who had lost his former timid and bashful look.

Georgette and her escort drew near the three gentlemen. The young girl bowed graciously to them and said,—

"Forgive me, gentlemen, for having kept you waiting, it was our coachman's fault, for his horses were dreadfully slow; but let me, first of all, present to you my husband, M. Colinet."

Colinet bowed gravely to the three gentlemen, who returned his greeting, muttering to themselves,—

"Was it to present her husband to us that she invited us here? that was hardly worth while."

Georgette resumed,—

"Gentlemen, I asked you to meet me in this garden because I know there are some paths where few people pass and where one can talk as if at home. I can see one on the other side of these flower-beds where we shall be undisturbed. Will you have the kindness to accompany me there?"

The three gentlemen bowed and the party went into a solitary path, where there were some benches. Georgette and her husband seated themselves, the three gentlemen did the same, the little groom keeping himself aloof. Then the young woman, turning to the viscount and De Mardeille, began,—

"I will make you understand in a few words why I acted with you as I did. First of all, gentlemen, I am neither from Normandy nor Bordelaise. I am from Lorraine; Toul is my birthplace, my parents, honest but poor farmers, are named Granery. I am the sister of Aimée and Suzanne."

The viscount and M. de Mardeille started with surprise, and their brows were overshadowed by gloom when they heard these words pronounced, while Dupont said to himself,—

"Why, what has that got to do with me?"

"Yes," resumed Georgette, addressing herself to M. de Mardeille, "I am the sister of that poor Aimée who came to Paris, where she hoped by her talent as an embroideress to earn enough to be useful to her parents. As ill-luck would have it, she fell in your way. Aimée was beautiful, she pleased you; she was simple and inexperienced, she believed all you said to her, believed in your promises and your vows — and — she allowed you to betray her. A child, a son, was the result of this connection. Then you were no longer the same to her, your visits became rarer, and when

she asked you for the wherewithal to feed and to bring up her child you did not come to see her again. Oh, monsieur, one must have a very bad heart to behave thus; to cease to love a person is quite possible, but to repulse a mother who asks of you bread for your child is unworthy, is base."

M. de Mardeille hung his head without answering. Georgette then turned towards the viscount, and said,—

"Need I remind you, monsieur, that your conduct to my sister Suzanne was exactly the same as this gentleman's to Aimée. You seduced a young girl who was innocence itself, as you very well know; then, having made her the mother of a daughter, you abandoned her and, that you might not be troubled by her tears and complaints, you left Paris.

"My sisters came back to the country in despair. They threw themselves at our parents' feet with their children, whom they were nursing. Instead of cursing them, my parents wept with them and tried to console them; for among us parents do not curse their children when they are unfortunate. Is it not more natural to forgive them? But when I saw my sisters every day weeping over their children's cradles I said to myself,—

"'I also will go to Paris, but I shall go to avenge them.' I was twenty years old, I was

strong and I had a resolute mind. My parents tried in vain to oppose my departure, but I started. Unfortunately Aimée did not then know M. de Mardeille's address, and Suzanne was ignorant of the fact that the viscount had returned to Paris; but nothing stopped me. 'I shall find them,' I said to myself. Something told me that I should be successful in my enterprise; I flattered myself that I should make a conquest of you, gentlemen. You know whether I have been successful.

"Now, M. de Mardeille, I want to tell you that the twelve thousand francs that I demanded of you were for your son; they have been placed at interest for him, they will serve to bring him up.

"And you, viscount, of whom I asked twenty thousand francs, because I knew that you were richer than M. de Mardeille and because the education of a girl is more expensive than that of a boy, you must know that this sum will serve to educate and furnish a dowry for Suzanne's child.

"Well, gentlemen, do you think now that my conduct is blamable? The gold which you were willing to sacrifice in order to ruin me, as you had ruined my sisters, has been put to a good use in furnishing the means of bringing up your children properly, and that which you would have employed for a bad action accomplishes a deed which will do you honor. Well, gentlemen, do you blame me now?"

"By Jove! no," cried the viscount, "rather it

was very well done. You have perfectly acquitted yourself of your intention. Receive my compliments, madame, as well as this little skirt which I hasten to restore to you. Here, Tom, give that garment to madame."

M. de Mardeille did not take all this in such good part as the viscount; however, he felt that he must resign himself and at least make a semblance of repenting his fault, and for this reason he said to Georgette,—

"Madame, I have misjudged you; that is true. I treated your sister Aimée rather slightingly; you have repaired a forgetfulness, a wrong. We men are so occupied with business, with pleasure, we are led away, and we are sometimes guilty when we do not intend to be so. Give my compliments to your sister. Here is the little skirt which became you so well."

"But I, madame," cried Dupont, "I never wronged any of your sisters, and why should you mix me up in this matter?"

"You, monsieur," resumed Georgette smiling, "I at first believed to be a frank, loyal man, with whom I need not be afraid to go out if I was alone in Paris. I did not know these gentlemen's addresses, which my sisters sent me later on. I wanted to go to the theatre and into the promenades, hoping that I should there discover or meet those whom I was determined to find."

"I understand! I was to serve as your escort."

"Something of the sort, monsieur. As to your love; oh, that didn't alarm me when I had learned that you had lied to me, that you were a married man. As that fact was very indifferent to me, I could still have forgiven you; but you tried to take liberties with me and to act in a very unconventional manner. Then, monsieur, I hastily left you and my little skirt, which I hope you have brought back to me."

"Yes, madame, here it is," and Dupont, hanging his head with a rather confused expression, drew from his pocket a little packet which he gave to Georgette; the latter took it and handed it to her husband. Then she rose and making a curtsey to the three personages who had been in love with her, she said to them,—

"Now, gentlemen, that I am justified in your eyes, it only remains for me to give you my best wishes for your future welfare," and bowing again Georgette took her husband's arm and went off.

The three would-be lovers watched her as she departed, and the viscount exclaimed,—

"By Jove! what a difference there is between this funnel thing and that little skirt which showed her form so well. Oh, if I had seen her dressed like this, all this would not have happened."

"Certainly not," cried M. de Mardeille, also fixing his gaze on Georgette; "this would never have happened, and I should still have my twelve thousand francs."

"I am entirely of your opinion, gentlemen," said Dupont. "What a difference it makes in her figure, and the change is not at all to her advantage, the idea of making herself look like a kind of sugar loaf, instead of letting us see her graceful contour. Ah, madame, you played us a very bad trick there."